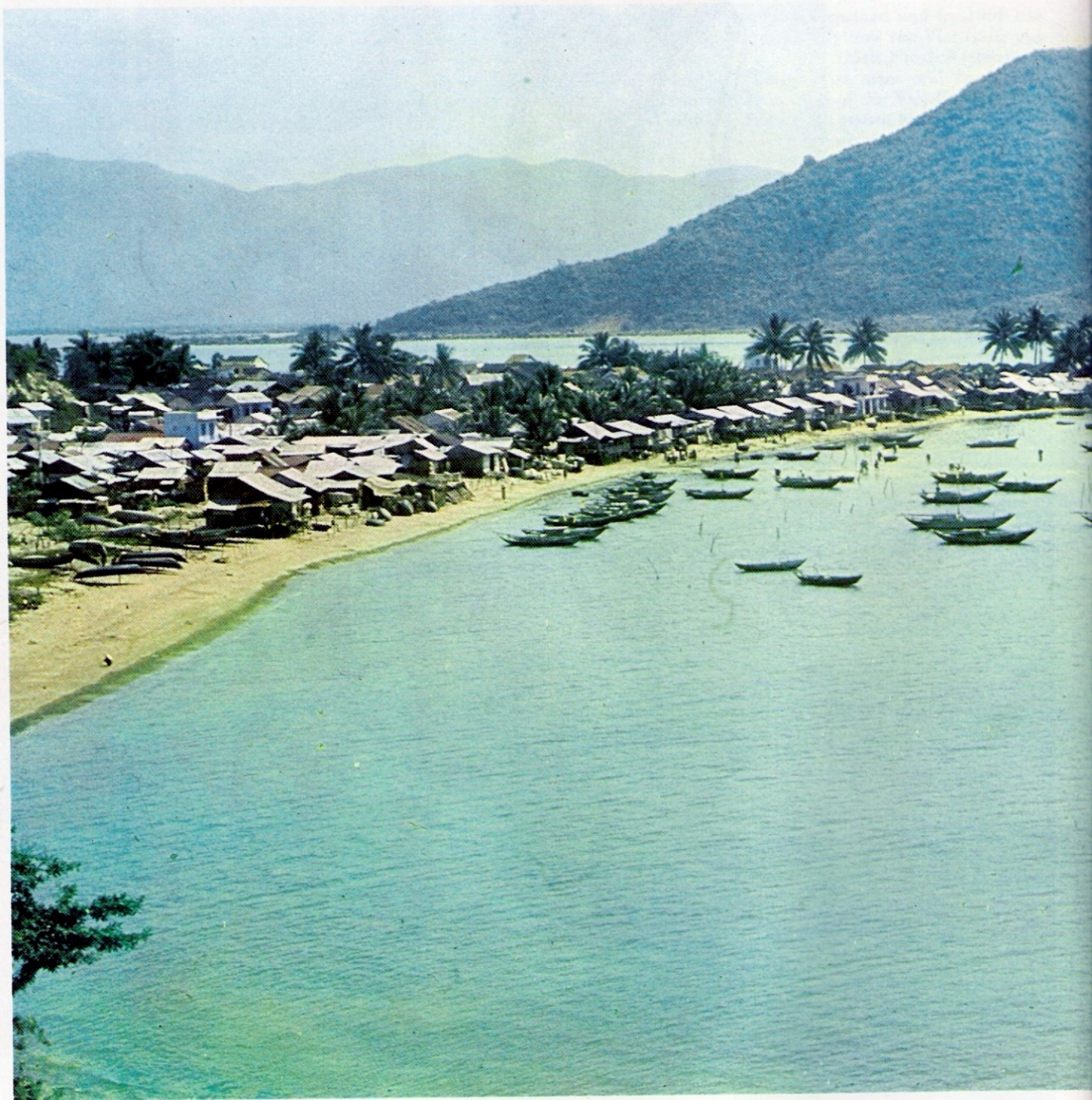


In Memorium

Three days before Christmas, 1961, the first American died by Viet Cong bullets. In memory of the soldiers of USARV who have given their lives here; they shall not be forgotten.



The beauty to be found in Vietnam is shown by this hamlet north of Nha Trang. At the right is the statue of Buddha which overlooks the city and harbor of Nha Trang. Top photo by SSgt. Robert Peterson; right photo by Sp5 Gordon Gahan.



1961-1964

The Darkest Era



The situation was becoming critical in South Vietnam. The Diem government asked for increased U.S. assistance in October, 1961. The American government responded immediately.

Advisors were increased. Supply personnel and helicopter units were also sent to assist the struggling nation. A small logistical team arrived in December, 1961, followed by two Army aviation companies. The entire group numbered less than 500 men.

The first aviation company, the 57th Transportation Company (Light Helicopter), to arrive was put into operation immediately. Ten days after arrival the unit's Shawnee helicopters were flying Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) troops into combat.

The 57th was quickly followed by the 8th Transportation Company. Both units were later redesignated; the 57th became the 120th Aviation Company and the 8th was renamed the 117th Aviation Company.

The remaining new troops were assigned directly as advisors to ARVN units or to the U.S. Army Support Group, Vietnam, the forerunner of the United States Army, Vietnam.

Each ARVN Corps had attached to it U.S. Army advisory teams. They brought their specialized knowledge in aviation, logistics, planning, ordnance, medical services, communications, artillery and use of paramilitary forces to assist in the battle.

Advisory teams and detachments were dispatched down to battalion level. The arrival of the first elements of the 5th Special Forces Group in 1962 saw special warfare detachments assigned to remote or primitive areas to teach Montagnards and similar groups how to defend themselves.

South Vietnam was in serious danger of being overrun by Communist forces in 1961. Approximately 65 percent of the country was completely or partially under Viet Cong control.

Warfare was leaving the terrorist stage and was now entering into the stage of small unit attacks on strategic hamlets



Vo Chi Cong

Born in 1921 in Quang Nam Province, Vo Chi Cong joined the Communist revolutionaries in his teens. He is one of the major founders of the National Liberation Front and probably a key figure in the People's Revolutionary Party—yet he is an unknown.



Tran Nam Trung

Like Party Chairman Vo, Tran is a militant revolutionary. Born in North Vietnam in 1913 and formerly an officer in the North Vietnamese Army, he is now secretary general of the People's Revolutionary Party, the party that claims to represent the South Vietnamese people.



Helicopters return from lifting ARVN soldiers into battle during the early months of 1963.

and lightly defended villages, although terror attacks were still common as a psychological weapon against the people.

The Communist party in South Vietnam, called the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP), claimed nearly 100,000 members. The PRP overtly asserted it was "the vanguard of the National Liberation Front (NLF), the soul of the NLF."

Although denying any ties with Hanoi, Peking or Moscow, beyond the "fraternal ties of Communism," Radio Hanoi announced the PRP's formation on January 18, 1962.

Claims were being made that the NLF was the true government of South Vietnam. In the countryside, the PRP and its military arm, the Viet Cong, were extracting taxes from the peasants, forcibly impressing thousands into their services

and requiring families to provide food, clothing and shelter for them. Whole villages were sometimes required to build bunker and trench systems for guerrillas.

Delegates from the PRP were sent to 30 Asian and African nations, and semi-official diplomatic relations were established with eight Communist countries and three non-Communist governments. These delegates traveled on North Vietnamese passports and used Northern currency, although they claimed to represent the South Vietnamese people.

Despite American assistance, the terror attacks were causing an appalling number of casualties. During the period 1959 through 1964 about 20,000 South Vietnamese military had been killed, over 12,000 captured and 35,000 wounded.

For Valor,



Distinguished Service Cross



Distinguished Service Medal



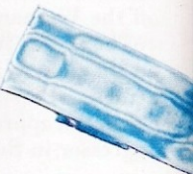
Silver Star



Bronze Star



Air Medal



Medal



Purple Heart



Good Conduct Medal



National Defense Service Medal



Presidential Unit Citation



Valor