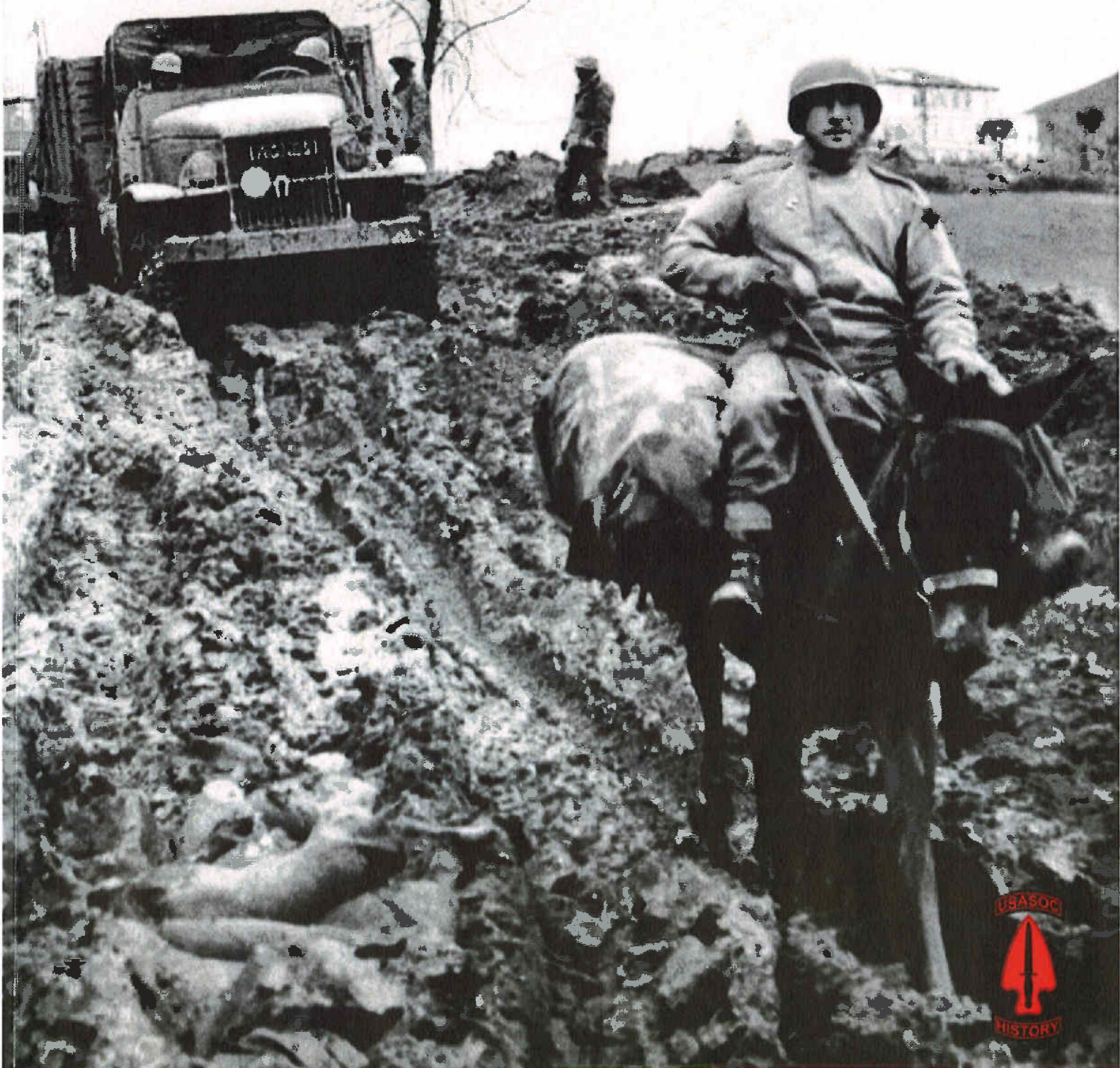
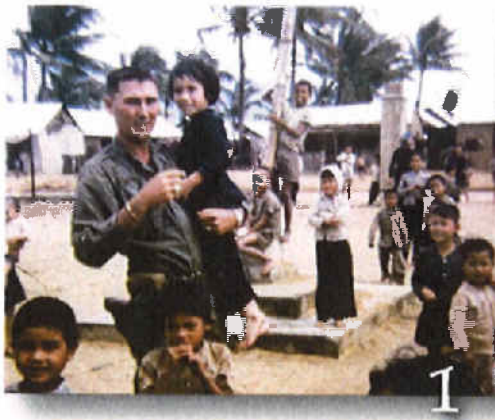


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# Veritas





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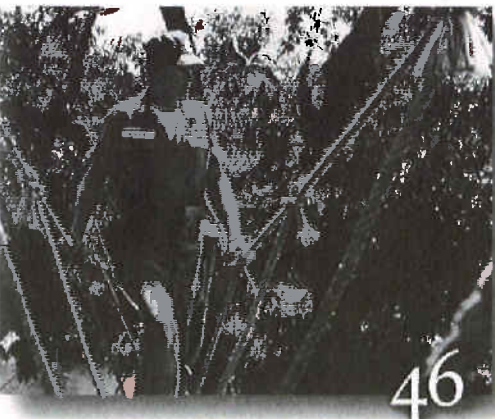
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"Child mortality rate in the Montagnard villages was 70-80 percent from birth to 10 years old. We would focus on children's cleanliness," said First Lieutenant (1LT) Andrew Lattu.

# ***Battle Without Bullets*** The 41<sup>st</sup> Civil Affairs Company in Vietnam - Part I: 1965-1967

by Troy J. Sacquety

*"A Peace Corps with rifles. That is one of the nicer names for the hog raisers, school marms, latrine builders, well diggers, medicinemen, and soldiers who constitute the 41<sup>st</sup> Civil Affairs Company."<sup>1</sup>*

The 41<sup>st</sup> was one of only three Civil Affairs (CA) companies to serve in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) [the others were the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>], and did so from 1965 to 1970. Its mission was to bolster faith in the RVN government by helping to "win the hearts and minds" of the rural population by assisting with construction, agricultural, medical, economic, and educational programs to improve standards of living. It is beyond the scope of a single article to present all 41<sup>st</sup> CA Company activities because each of the far-flung Teams has its own story. This two-part article will introduce the 41<sup>st</sup> to today's ARSOF soldiers by providing the company's mission, force structure, general history, and having some of the CA soldiers explain their work. Part I spans the Company's arrival in Vietnam in 1965 through 1967. Part II will describe operations from the 1968 Tet Offensive until the 41<sup>st</sup> deactivation in Vietnam in 1970. The important message is that the 41<sup>st</sup> Civil Affairs Company persevered in the face of innumerable obstacles and made a difference. As ARSOF is challenged today to win non-violent victories worldwide, it is important to remember what the 41<sup>st</sup> CA Company accomplished forty years ago in an equally challenging environment.

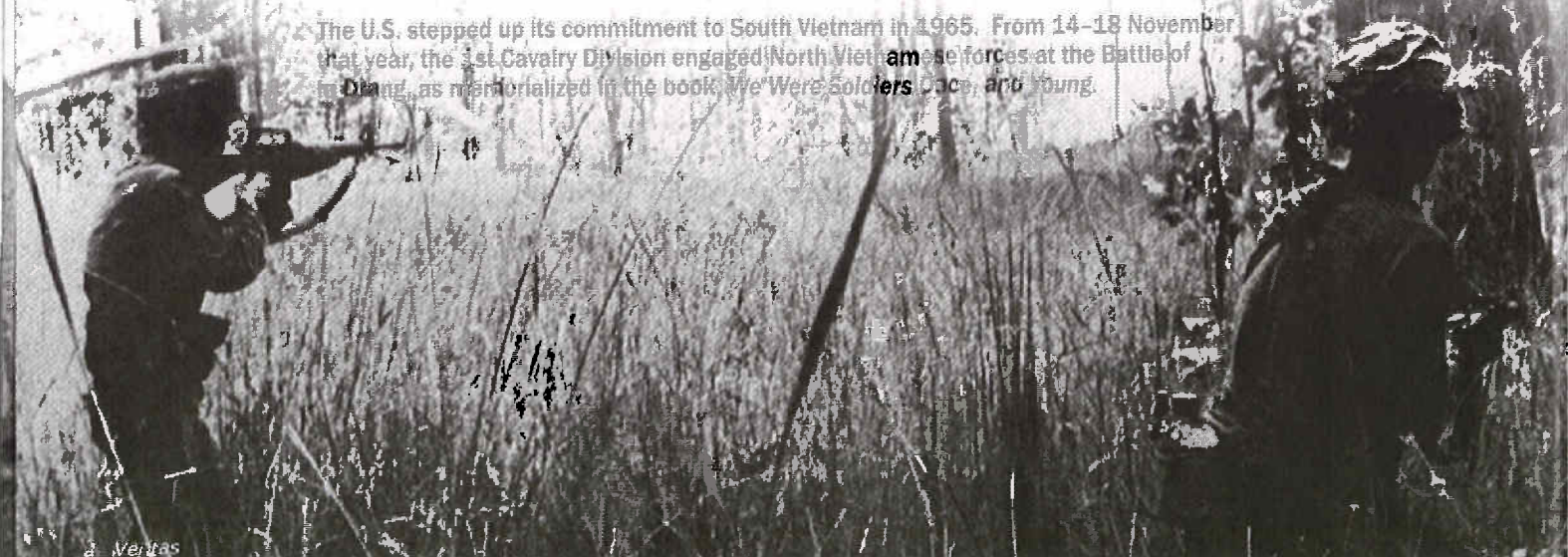
The war in Vietnam was escalating in the early 1960s. Created to fight a conventional war and mirrored after the conventional U.S. Army, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) was plagued by corruption and weak leadership. These factors encouraged the loosely-organized South Vietnamese Communist movement, the Viet Cong (VC), to grow and expand their control in the countryside through guerrilla warfare. By 1964, VC units, supported by the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), began to attack ARVN forces. The situation became so acute that the United States began to send large conventional military units to South Vietnam in 1965 to prevent Saigon

from falling. That year, the U.S. Army fought its first large-scale battles in Vietnam. But in reality, there were two wars ongoing in Vietnam: a conventional war against NVA-trained VC Main Force battalions; and a counter-insurgency war against the VC guerrilla units countryside.<sup>2</sup> U.S. Army Special Forces had been engaged in South Vietnam since 1960, but early Civil Affairs efforts were only cursory.

Individual officer advisors and Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) constituted the initial U.S. Army CA commitment to South Vietnam. Some of these MTTs recommended a larger CA role.<sup>3</sup> Though two-man CA Teams were an integral part of Special Forces "B" detachments in country, they were only making a token effort at civil assistance.<sup>4</sup> It was 1965 before the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), the unified command for all U.S. forces in Vietnam, requested a permanent American CA presence. The civilian U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) was in charge of the major civilian assistance programs. This changed with the MACV request.

On 27 August 1965, the 41<sup>st</sup> CA Company, 95<sup>th</sup> Civil Affairs Group at Fort Gordon, Georgia, was alerted for deployment.<sup>5</sup> Its only previous operational experience had come earlier that year when small elements were attached to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Civil Affairs Company in the Dominican Republic. However, the lessons learned in Santa Domingo had little application for Vietnam. To satisfy MACV guidance, the 41<sup>st</sup> reorganized into sixteen "Displaced Persons Teams," three specialized teams covering Public Health, Labor, and Public Welfare, and a command and control headquarters. It was brought to its full Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) strength of 75 officers and 65 enlisted men. New arrivals were given a cursory three-day

The U.S. stepped up its commitment to South Vietnam in 1965. From 14-18 November that year, the 1st Cavalry Division engaged North Vietnamese forces at the Battle of Ia Drang, as memorialized in the book *We Were Soldiers Once, and Young*.



## MAN WITH A MISSION

An idealized view of Civil Affairs.



Unofficial pocket patch of the 41st Civil Affairs Company.

course at the U.S. Army Civil Affairs School.<sup>6</sup> Second Lieutenant (2LT) Lawrence A. Castagneto recalled that the training they received before deployment was based on WWII Military Government models that were not very applicable to Vietnam. Unit members were told that they "were going to be part of MACV . . . but the intent was to support the infantry and work with the civilians," recalled 2LT Castagneto.<sup>7</sup>

The 41<sup>st</sup> CA main body sailed for Vietnam on 1 December 1965 aboard the USNS *General Leroy El Tinge*. It was a "one stack [WWII] Liberty ship. . . it was rock and roll the whole time . . . we were getting about an eight-foot swell in from the port side and that thing rolled from San Diego to Guam, which was about 20 days," recalled 2LT Castagneto. The unit arrived at Nha Trang in late December to establish their home in the large tent city.<sup>9</sup> Individual teams soon left for their assignments elsewhere.

Teams from the 41<sup>st</sup> CA Company were deployed within three of Vietnam's four Corps areas. They were often parceled out and "attached for operational control, administration and logistics," to American combat units or MACV Advisory Teams.<sup>10</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 14<sup>th</sup> CA Teams were sent to the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division in III Corps. Four Teams (3, 5, 10, 16) were provided to the III Marine Amphibious Force in I Corps.<sup>11</sup> The remaining nine CA Teams supported First Field Force, Vietnam (I FFV) units in II Corps.<sup>12</sup> Spread all over South Vietnam, Company administration of the units was chaotic.

For example, at various times in 1966, the CA Teams in II Corps were attached to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Teams 9, 15), 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Teams 8, 9), 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (Teams 4, 6, 11, and 12), 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Team 1), and the 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group (Teams 12, 13). The Company headquarters and Public Health, Labor, and Public Welfare Teams remained at Camp John F. McDermott in Nha Trang.<sup>13</sup> Because the CA 'Generalist' Teams were so dispersed, the 41<sup>st</sup> headquarters was only able to administer its units in II Corps. The Teams in the other Corps areas got short-

## Civil Affairs Curriculum School Course

The CA curriculum school course changed little in the early years of Vietnam. Military Intelligence officer 1LT Lee Livingston, (1966-1967), said that the "CA school focused on the WWII military government examples on one end of the spectrum and on self-help village health/food/transportation issues at the other end of the spectrum . . . We discussed in some detail the British lessons in Malaya." Livingston added, "I don't recall during my year in Vietnam where I said, 'Oh yeah, I remember that from CA school' . . . there was no Civil Affairs instruction manual, no chart, no list of things to see or do . . . It was all OJT [On-The Job Training] after I got there." But, Livingston said, "The self-help message stuck. Let them do it, just help."<sup>8</sup>



Left: 1LT Lee Livingston was a Military Intelligence officer assigned to the 41st.

Below: Students learned what a typical village should look like with this table model at the Civil Affairs School.



# Relocation



Newly-relocated Montagnards faced a future that was far different from their traditional ways.



In 1965-66, villagers were relocated from their homes into "Strategic Hamlets." The intent was to cut the civilians off from the VC and allow "free fire zones" in the countryside.



The crossbow was a traditional hunting instrument among the Montagnards.



Relocation camps often lacked even basic necessities. The 41st did what it could to provide rudimentary washing facilities.

Villagers newly-arrived at a relocation camp were often confused and had only what they could carry with them.



Newly-relocated civilians lived in primitive housing (as evidenced by the tarps). One mission of the 41st CA was to help provide better housing.





The headquarters of the 41st Civil Affairs Company at Nha Trang in 1966. The unit's unofficial patch is on the left, while the SSI for U.S. Army Vietnam, (USARV) is on the right. USARV was a component command of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), and controlled all the Army's logistics and service units.

changed. The CA Teams faced other dilemmas apart from a lack of administrative support.

Throughout the war, few leaders in the American or Vietnamese military understood CA.<sup>14</sup> Multiple government and non-government organizations from both countries were involved in "Civic Action" pacification programs to improve the image of the South Vietnamese regime among the people and reduce the VC influence.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, none of them were coordinated let alone integrated. While Civic Action was a long-term program, the 41st Civil Affairs Company's role in the "restoration process" was tactical; to get the locals immediate assistance and to encourage them to help themselves.<sup>16</sup> The military understanding at the time was that Civic Action did not mean "Westernizing, it meant improving social standards, environment and health."<sup>17</sup> The goal was to encourage the people to rely upon themselves and the South Vietnamese government until the 41st "worked themselves out of a job."<sup>18</sup> To accomplish this mission, the unit was to provide direct support to the major U.S. tactical units and province advisory teams.<sup>19</sup> This was easier said than done.

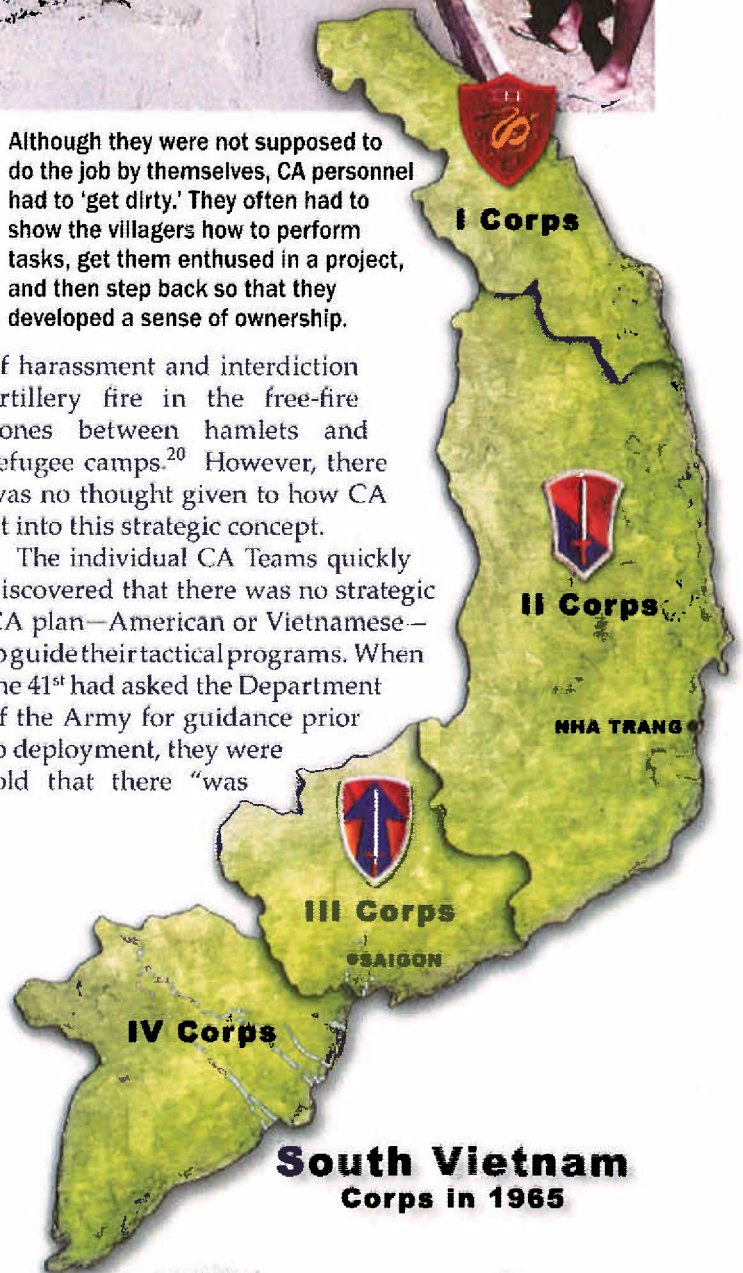
When the Company arrived in Vietnam, refugee relocation and assistance supported the "Strategic Hamlet" program. This entailed resettling ethnic Montagnards from remote areas in the countryside to centrally-located camps/hamlets. Saigon touted relocation as a means to reduce VC support. It also facilitated the employment



Although they were not supposed to do the job by themselves, CA personnel had to 'get dirty.' They often had to show the villagers how to perform tasks, get them enthused in a project, and then step back so that they developed a sense of ownership.

of harassment and interdiction artillery fire in the free-fire zones between hamlets and refugee camps.<sup>20</sup> However, there was no thought given to how CA fit into this strategic concept.

The individual CA Teams quickly discovered that there was no strategic CA plan—American or Vietnamese—to guide their tactical programs. When the 41st had asked the Department of the Army for guidance prior to deployment, they were told that there "was



South Vietnam  
Corps in 1965



Military Assistance Command, Vietnam SSI



United States Army, Vietnam SSI



I Field Force, Vietnam SSI



II Field Force, Vietnam SSI



III Marine Amphibious Force SSI

