

The Foundational Stages of the Hamlet Project–An (Bennu-Enu) June - December 1961

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ABSTRACT

Several factors led to the launch of the Strategic Hamlet Program, which means the Strategic Villages Group. Following the increase in Vietcong operations against South Vietnam, the competent authorities attempted on April 19, 1961, to develop a plan of action for South Vietnam, to stop communist activity, especially military activity, which threatened the authority of the government in South Vietnam as well as American interests.

The village defense project extended throughout the existence of the strategic Hamlet project. It is clear from this that it was one of the results of the counter-insurgency plan, which was the fortification of villages and self-defense, which was later called. Although the project was the result of the participation of Vietnamese efforts, as well as American assistance to them, it proved its results in the first stage, and this resulted in the development and continuation of the Hamlet project later and became the supporting force for it in expelling the Viet Cong forces.

Key words: Vietnam, Hamlet program, United States and Southeast Asia, President Diem.

INTRODUCTION

After World War II (1939-1945), the liberation movement escalated in the Third World. This coincided with the disintegration of the temporary alliance between the East and the West after the defeat of fascism and Nazism. The Soviet Union began to support those movements, especially those who embraced leftist ideas. This was considered by the United States of America and its Western allies to be a threat to its strategic interests, and a hidden Soviet desire to spread the spirit of communist revolution. Southeast Asia was one of those regions that witnessed the outbreak of an armed struggle to get rid of colonialism and its influence, which allowed the communist powers represented by the Soviet Union and People's China to support movements that used the method of armed struggle. This move made the United States and its local allies use many means to limit the influence of leftist movements, which was increasing. Several projects were proposed in the Republic of Vietnam, to prevent peasants from engaging in or cooperating with these movements. The Hamlet project was the most important of these projects. This research paper is an attempt to shed light on its foundational stages and the American role in proposing and developing that project.

1. Stages of Establishing Strategic Villages (Experimental Stage)

Several factors led to the launch of the Strategic Hamlet Program, which means the Strategic Villages Group(1). Following the increase in Vietcong(2) operations against South Vietnam, the competent authorities attempted on April 19, 1961, to develop a plan of action for South Vietnam, to stop communist activity, especially military activity, which threatened the authority of the government in South Vietnam as well as American interests (3). So a project was proposed by an interdepartmental US task force, consisting of representatives from the Departments of State, Defense, Treasury, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of International Cooperation, the US Agency for International Development, and the Office of the President. The work team also benefited from advice provided by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet Headquarters, the Advisory Group for Military Assistance, as well as the participation of the US Ambassador in Saigon (4).

The committee reached a set of measures that must be taken to prevent the communists from controlling Vietnam, and included the military, psychological, and political aspects as well as the economic aspect, as well as the aspect of secret and intelligence work, if all of these commandments come together to ultimately form a project that "helps in the independence and freedom of Vietnam and enhances the