

Documents from the Phoenix Program

supplied and introduced by Douglas Valentine
author of *The Phoenix Program*



>>> Created by the CIA in Saigon in 1967, Phoenix was a program aimed at "neutralizing"—through assassination, kidnapping, and systematic torture—the civilian infrastructure that supported the Viet Cong insurgency in South Vietnam. It was a terrifying "final solution" that violated the Geneva Conventions and traditional American ideas of human morality. (For a full introduction to Phoenix, see below.)

While researching the Phoenix Program for my book on the subject, I conducted over a hundred interviews and collected boxes full of documents from individuals, as well as from the State Department and Department of Defense. The most important documents provided by any one individual came from retired CIA officer Nelson Brickham, the man most responsible for the creation of the Phoenix Program.

Luckily for history, Brickham kept copies of the documents he wrote while with the CIA; otherwise, there would be no documentary evidence of how Phoenix was actually created. During the evacuation of Saigon in April 1975, the CIA destroyed most of the documents it had about its assassination program, and none of what it kept at Langley headquarters can be obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests. This is no accident, for Phoenix is the model for the equally terrifying US homeland security apparatus.

Documents

Attack Against VC Infrastructure

[A Concept for Organization for Attack on VC Infrastructure](#)

[Personal Observations](#)

[A Proposal for the Coordination and Management of Intelligence Programs and Attack on VC Infrastructure and Local Irregular Forces](#)

[MACV Directive 381-41](#)

[Action Program for Attack on VC Infrastructure, 1967-1968](#)

[Carver memo, 7 August 1967 \(re: Attack on the Viet Cong Infrastructure\)](#)

[Program Guidance--Mount Attack on VC Infrastructure \[Project TAKEOFF\]](#)

[ICEX Briefing, August 1967](#)

[MACV Joint Messageform DTG 06 0910Z](#)

[MACV Directive 381-43](#)

[Evaluation Report: Processing of Viet Cong Suspects](#)

[Directive of the Prime Minister on the Neutralization of the VCI](#)

[Phung Hoang Advisor Handbook](#)

 [Internal Security in South Vietnam - Phoenix](#)

The Phoenix Project and Its Creator, Nelson Brickham

by Douglas Valentine

Nelson Brickham joined the CIA in 1949, serving first in the sedate Directorate of Intelligence, then transferring in 1955 to the Operations Division, where he served in the high-profile Soviet-Russia Division. Brickham gained a wide range of experience, from running black propaganda and false-flag recruitments, to gathering information on Soviet missile silos. Over the years he developed his own "systems approach" to spookery that he later employed when developing the Phoenix Program.

Brickham volunteered for duty in Vietnam in 1965. In the spring of 1966 he became chief of Field Operations in the Saigon station's Foreign Intelligence "liaison" branch. He had an office in the U.S. Embassy Annex but also spent time with his senior Vietnamese Police Special Branch counterparts in their office at the National Interrogation Center.

Brickham managed the veteran CIA liaison officers who were working

with Police Special Branch officers in South Vietnam's 44 provinces. These Vietnamese Special Branch officers functioned like detectives in the intelligence branch of a big-city police department. They also managed the CIA's gulag archipelago of secret interrogation centers. The Special Branch mounted both positive intelligence and counterintelligence operations. In some respects the Vietnamese Police Special Branch is the model for the covert action branch of the Department of Homeland Security.

Upon assuming the job as Chief of Field operations, Brickham inherited and sharpened three existing programs:

1) The Hamlet Informant Program (HIP), in which principal agents working for the CIA and Special Branch recruited informants in the hamlets. This was dangerous work, because no one likes a snitch, and because the snitches often lied and set-up innocent people. Informants know they are unliked, and they need to be motivated. Some of them were blackmailed into becoming informants; others did it for revenge. Money was the most common motivating factor used in recruiting people for the HIP Program. (The eerie resemblance to Ashcroft's short-lived TIPS program need not be emphasized.)

2) The Province Interrogation (PIC) Program. The CIA began building a secret torture chamber in each of South Vietnam's 44 provinces in 1964. Try to file an FOIA for information on them and see what happens. The CIA hired Pacific Architects and Engineers to build these facilities. Information from defectors and captured documents was put into the PIC Program reporting system, to which the CIA had total access.

3) Penetrations into the Viet Cong Infrastructure (usually by blackmailing or terrorizing a member of a targeted individual's family) were the most sought-after means of gathering information. Brickham conducted penetrations unilaterally and in liaison with the Special Branch. CIA province officers trained their counterpart Special Branch officers on how to mount penetrations, how to interrogate suspects, and how to recruit informants.

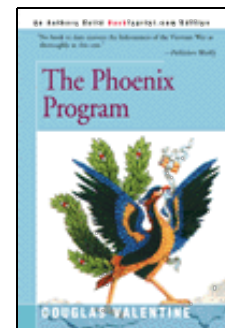
As Chief of Field Operations, Brickham established six regional offices and put a CIA liaison officer in each of South Vietnam's 44 provinces. CIA Station Chief John Hart liked this organizational scheme so much that he decided to put a CIA Covert Action paramilitary officer in each province, too. The CIA's Covert Action program under Tom Donohue had a \$28-million budget, while Brickham's liaison budget amounted to a paltry \$1 million a year. Many Covert Action officers were refugees from the Bay of Pigs fiasco. They ran the CIA's Armed Propaganda Teams (versions of which will soon be deployed by the Department of Homeland Security), Census Grievance Program, Montagnard program, and most importantly, the Counter-Terror (CT) Teams. According to Brickham, the purpose of the CT Teams (versions of which will also soon be deployed in America through the Homeland Security covert action apparatus) was to do to the terrorists what they were doing to us. In Vietnam that meant leaving

severed heads on fence posts.

Brickham would eventually bring the liaison and covert action people together in the Phoenix Program. The process began in July 1966 with the Roles and Missions Study, which concluded that military operations alone would not win the Vietnam War, and that a second "Pacification" war was needed 1) to destroy the Viet Cong Infrastructure and 2) win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese through political propaganda and psychological warfare. The Special Branch was assigned the task of attacking the Viet Cong Infrastructure, and Brickham focused on articulating the problem.

President Johnson sent CIA officer Robert Komer to Vietnam in August 1966 to organize this second Pacification war, through the Office of Civil Operations (OCO), formed in October 1966. (OCO is an early model of the current Office of Homeland Security.) OCO "coordinated" field units from the State Department, the Information Service, and the CIA, and had branches for psyops, political action, defectors, public safety, and economic development. At this point Brickham's boss, Howard Stone, the chief of Foreign Intelligence in the CIA's Saigon station, transferred Brickham and his field operations people out of the CIA station and put them in the Revolutionary Development Cadre Program, which was managed by CIA officer Lou Lapham. Considered the CIA's "second" station, the Rev Dev Cadre program taught the CIA's Vietnamese assets how to "pacify" the Vietnamese people.

Douglas Valentine is an author, researcher, investigator, consultant, critic, and poet. His published works to date include *The Hotel Tacloban*, a highly praised account of life and death in a Japanese prisoner of war camp, and *The Phoenix Program*, which Professor Alfred W. McCoy describes as "the definitive account" of the CIA's most secret and deadly covert operation of the Vietnam War. Both *The Hotel Tacloban* and *The Phoenix Program* are available through iUniverse.com, the on-demand Internet book publisher, as Authors Guild imprint backinprint books. Valentine's most recent book, *TDY*, also is available through iUniverse.com. His fourth book, *The Strength of the Wolf: The Federal Bureau of Narcotics 1930-1968*, will be published by Verso in spring 2004. His Websites are [here](#) and [here](#).



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