

important for all operations officers and commanders who will plan, coordinate or execute operations at the brigade level or higher in the 21st century.

COL Gene Thompson
USASOC
Fort Bragg, N.C.

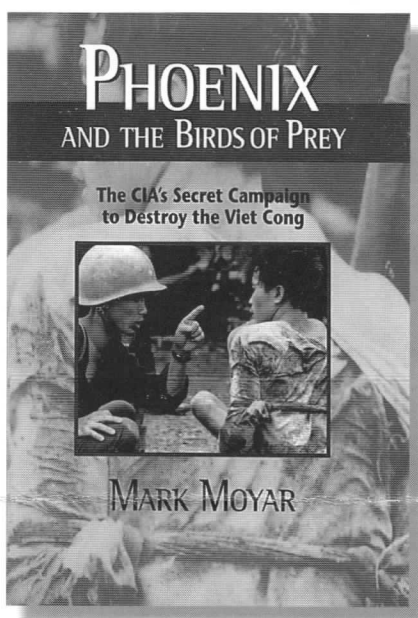
Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: The CIA's Secret Campaign to Destroy the Viet Cong. By Mark Moyar. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1997. ISBN 1-55750-593-4. 464 pages. \$29.95.

Phoenix and the Birds of Prey is a well-researched and concisely written account of the Central Intelligence Agency's Phoenix Program, conducted during the Vietnam War. The much-maligned program, which sought to neutralize the effectiveness of the Viet Cong civil infrastructure in South Vietnam in the late 1960s, is treated in a well-balanced and mature manner.

Moyar's work is welcome. The Phoenix Program was not the great bugaboo that antiwar activists of the time thought it was. Nor was it designed as a cover for assassination. The real purpose of Phoenix was to coordinate intelligence between the various U.S. collection agencies (civilian and military) and the South Vietnamese government.

Those who have backgrounds in intelligence will already know that fusion is one of the most difficult tasks associated with intelligence. The CIA seldom shared its sources because it did not trust others to protect them adequately. Moreover, sharing intelligence means sharing credit. Intelligence professionals, military and civilian, are rated according to their individual efforts to satisfy the goals of their organization — not the goals of a war effort.

The problem of fusion was magnified when the wild card of South Vietnamese intelligence was added



to the game. American intelligence didn't trust its own people; it certainly placed little faith in the Vietnamese. Despite these difficulties, Phoenix succeeded in eliminating many in the Viet Cong "shadow government."

Phoenix intelligence-coordination centers were active in all South Vietnamese provinces. Each province had Provincial Reconnaissance Forces, or PRU, who normally worked directly for Saigon-appointed province chiefs. The PRU were the military organizations that acted on Phoenix intelligence. Using that intelligence, the PRU were able to track down, kill and capture many VC.

In most cases, these VC did not wear uniforms, in contravention of the Geneva Accords. The VC chose to live among the South Vietnamese people, using them as human shields. It is regrettable that innocents died as a result.

It was the VC who often set up their bases close to populated areas in order to protect their operations from American air bombardment. It was the VC who conducted kangaroo courts and then either gutted those who disagreed with them or cut off their heads. If one seeks to

assign blame for the brutality of the war, one need look no farther than the VC.

It is probably true that some corrupt province chiefs used the PRU to settle old scores. It is also true that the PRU were highly effective and in many provinces all but eliminated VC activities. Moyar rightly points out that the "kills" usually outnumbered the "captured" in PRU combat operations, but civil wars are inherently brutal.

In all of his research, Moyar was unable to find even one CIA agent or U.S. military adviser who engaged in assassination. In fact, Moyar systematically debunks the stories of every person who claimed otherwise — and some of those persons testified under oath before Congress. The fact is that through the Phoenix Program, the CIA and U.S. military intelligence, along with South Vietnamese intelligence, effectively coordinated a great deal of local provincial intelligence that led to a great many successful military operations. Success in this context meant the death or capture of VC soldiers and the destruction of their supporting infrastructure.

As an impartial, credible observer, Mark Moyar deserves a laurel for bringing the facts of the Phoenix Program to light. His book is recommended reading for all soldiers, but particularly for those interested in a greater understanding of the Vietnam conflict and the intelligence functions conducted during the war.

LTC Robert B. Adolph Jr.
U.S. Army (ret.)
Sarajevo, Bosnia.

