

Chiêu Hồi

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"Chiêu Hồi, "Loosely translated as 'Open Arms' was an initiative by the United States and the Republic of South Vietnam to encourage defection by the People's Army of Vietnam and Viet Cong and their supporters to the side of the government during the Vietnam War. According to the United States, there were 101,511 defections under the program, but one analyst speculates that less than 25% of those were genuine.

Defection was urged by means of a propaganda campaign, usually leaflets delivered by artillery shell or dropped over enemy-controlled areas by aircraft, or messages broadcast over areas of South Vietnam. A number of incentives were offered to those who chose to cooperate, along with psychological warfare to break enemy morale. To further this aim, invitations to defect, which also acted as safe conduct passes, were printed on clear plastic waterproof bags used to carry ammunition for the U.S. soldiers' M16 rifle. Each bag held one magazine and was sealed to prevent moisture from the jungle's humid climate from damaging the contents. When the magazine was needed during a firefight with the enemy, the bag would be torn open and discarded, in the hope that it would later be discovered by enemy troops who would read the text and consider defection.

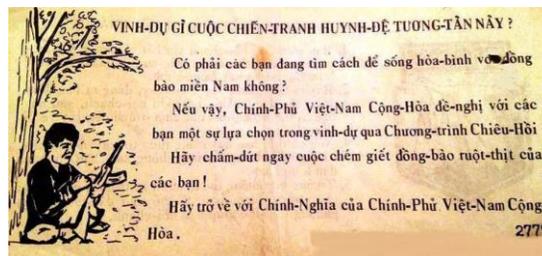
By 1967, approximately 75,000 defections had been recorded.... The program had some difficulty catching on, due in part to culture gap—errors, such as misspellings and unintentionally offensive statements—and worsened by communist reprisals against defectors and their families. To make matters worse, as testified during the 1971 Winter Soldier Investigation, the passes were sometimes ignored by U.S. forces, and their holders shot while surrendering.

Overall, however, the Chiêu Hồi program was considered successful. Those who surrendered were known as 'Hoi Chanh' and were often integrated into allied units as Kit Carson Scouts, operating in the same area where they had defected. Many made great contributions to the effectiveness of U.S. units, and often distinguished themselves, earning decorations as high as the Silver Star. The program was relatively inexpensive and removed over 100,000 combatants from the field (assuming the accuracy of the numbers recorded and the sincerity of the defections)." Edited from Wikipedia. An exhaustive and illustrated treatment of the 'Hoi Chanh' can be found on the net in a psyops publication. The methods used in the Chiêu Hồi, 'Open Arms' program were also practiced in Afghanistan.

The LORD of hosts, or the God of the armies of heaven, also extends 'Open Arms' to those at enmity against God. We must all Chiêu Hồi and surrender to Him. **"...All ye that labour and are heavy laden...** are those who groaned under the weight of ceremonial laws and the traditions of the elders. He tells them that by coming to Him, and embracing the new system of religion, they would be freed from these burdensome rites and ceremonies. There can be no doubt, however, that He meant here chiefly to address the poor, lost, ruined sinner: the man burdened with a consciousness of his transgressions, trembling at his danger, and seeking deliverance. For such there is relief. Christ tells them to come to Him, to believe in Him, and to trust Him, and Him only, for salvation. Doing this, He will give them rest. Rest from their sins, from the alarms of conscience, from the terrors of the law, and from the fears of eternal death." Albert Barnes, First Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, (1830–1868).

Semper Fidelis,

Chaplain Ron



Chiêu Hồi leaflet picked up on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, First Tour.



The PF pictured with Chaplain Ron retrieved this Viet Cong flag that was flying over the village following a firefight. He was killed in action during another confrontation with the enemy a few days later in April 1970. Second Tour.



Memories of yesterday hang on my office wall