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Pres file

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Thursday, July 27, 1967 -- 3:30 p.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith Dick Helms files with you a report on CIA operations in Saigon from Bill Colby -- a most experienced and cool hand in the business.

It is, on balance, a heartening report.

The first paragraph on "The Operating Climate" gives the feel.

W. W. Rostow

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4
NJ 94-132
By imp, NARA, Date 1-3-95

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

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27 JUL 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: The President
SUBJECT : Transmittal of Vietnam Report

1. Mr. William Colby, Chief of our operating division on the Far East, is currently on an inspection trip during the course of which he has visited our Vietnam Station. Pursuant to a remark you made to me at a recent meeting, I asked Mr. Colby to take a very careful look at all of our activities in Vietnam and submit a personal report to me on his findings and conclusions. I think you will find this report interesting and informative and I am, therefore, forwarding it to you as an attachment to this memorandum.

2. Mr. Colby is one of our ablest and most professional officers, and one long personally associated with the Vietnam problem. In January of 1959, he became Deputy Chief of our Station in Saigon and in June of 1960 he took over as Chief of Station, a post he held until September 1962 when he returned to Washington to become Deputy Chief of the Far East Division. In February 1963, he replaced the recently deceased Mr.

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FitzGerald as Chief of this Division. Mr. Colby has devoted a major portion of his professional attention to Vietnam and its problems for more than eight years. It would be hard to find a more knowledgeable observer.

3. I think you will recognize from the general tone as well as the specific contents of the attached report that this Agency is going flat out in its effort to contribute to the success of the total US program in Vietnam and is utilizing the full range of professional resources, skill and imagination available to us. In numerical terms, our input is small in comparison to other components of the government, particularly the military. Qualitatively, however, I find the performance of our officers in the field most gratifying and believe this view is shared by their colleagues in other government components, including not only Ambassador Bunker but also his predecessors in that office.

4. As Mr. Colby indicates, there are obviously sticky problems which remain to be solved. These, however, are being worked on with every resource at our command. For example, we are already endeavoring to meet the requirements he identifies for additional personnel. We have recently arranged to have 50 military officers detailed to this Agency for work in the Revolutionary Development program, our own reservoir

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of available professionals being exhausted. Thirty-seven of these have already been trained in the United States and are en route to Vietnam.

5. The thing I find perhaps most significant is the way our Station is playing its role as a participating member of the US team effort rather than a separate bureaucratic entity. Our officers and their programs are fully integrated into the total structure headed by Ambassador Bunker and, on the pacification side, into the new combined organization which Ambassador Komar directs as General Westmoreland's executive agent.

Dick

Richard Helms
Director

Attachment

cc: The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

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25 JUL 1967

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Review of the Activities of the CIA's Vietnam Station

I. THE OPERATING CLIMATE

1. The impressions I obtained of the CIA Station's activities in Vietnam on this trip are significantly different from the impressions obtained on previous visits. During earlier periods, in looking at the Station one saw a harassed but imaginative band of officers wrestling with a variety of challenges and launching new programs in an effort to throw up some obstacles to slow the Viet Cong momentum and protect us from the fragility of the Saigon Government (the GVN). On this occasion, I saw a Station with a clear and important role in the overall American effort, working as a full and highly regarded member of a Country Team and possessing the initiative in the contest with the Viet Cong. The Station is still over-committed, but is efficiently structured to make a significant contribution for a force of its size.

II. ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL

2. Some of the Station's programs in the past were remarkable innovations, unique in the quality of their execution. Yet since they were small, even though well polished, they were precious indications of

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future promise more than major contributions to a current war effort.

That day is now over for several reasons, including the greater numbers of our Agency personnel now on the scene, the vast improvement of the Station's organization into regional groups under effective chiefs, and the fact that our officers are approaching programs as participants in a joint effort and as co-workers with their colleagues in other agencies, rather than as parochialists.

3. Today we have [redacted] American personnel on duty in Vietnam as members of the Vietnam Station. By contrast, there are around 460,000 US military in Vietnam, of which about 10,000 are intelligence personnel. AID's strength in Vietnam is about 2,000, the Embassy has about 230 people, and USIA about 120. Although in light of our total worldwide responsibilities it will be difficult to increase our career personnel input, our activities in Vietnam must and will be supplemented by the utilization of additional military and contract personnel in order to provide the manpower necessary to execute programs of the scope and variety of those in which the Station is engaged.

III. PRINCIPAL PROGRAM AREAS

4. The Attack on the Communist Apparatus: As the immediate military threat is pushed farther from the populated areas, it becomes ever more important to eliminate the Viet Cong apparatus (also known as

the political control mechanism or infrastructure) in order to free the people of South Vietnam from the Communists' covert authority. The importance of this task has been underlined by Ambassador Komer and is well recognized by the Station. The Station is hard at work collating our knowledge of the Viet Cong political structure at all levels in order to facilitate the identification and capture of key Communist cadre. The 7,000-odd low-level reports that we pass to our military colleagues each month now not only include order of battle type information on the strength and location of Communist military units but are including a steadily growing amount of intelligence on important Communist officials, i. e., their identities, functions and physical locations. This is a healthy sign. In this endeavor the Station is exploiting a variety of information sources including its [redacted] interrogation centers at both provincial and national levels, [redacted]

[redacted] informants resident in contested hamlets), and a mass of detailed information received from [redacted] Vietnamese who carry out the 1.3(a)(4) "Census Grievance" program. At the same time, some of our best officers are utilizing the most professional techniques in pursuing [redacted] covert operations aimed at key members of the enemy's highest level command structure in order to open channels of communication to individuals in this key target group so that we can tempt them to defect,

persuade them to act as we would have them act or, at a minimum, sow doubts among them.

5. Revolutionary Development: The reorganization of the American Revolutionary Development effort has been a major step toward improving the control of US efforts in the "Other War," and will help to ensure that the programs of all US agencies will aim at concentrated objectives. The

[REDACTED] Revolutionary Development cadre currently in training under 1.3(a)(4) a program operated by our Station constitute the foundation stone of this RD program. While these cadre are by no means perfect, their training, motivation and techniques have stimulated a series of efforts to emulate them and thereby extend their effectiveness or profit from the experience gained in developing the concepts which guide their activities. It is heartening indeed to see some of the results of this activity, to visit, for example, a Delta hamlet of 160 families with an elected council and a self-defense force of 78 young men, located in an area where only six months ago an RD team began its work with 12 families who lived there more or less under Viet Cong authority. It is even more heartening to see how many similar communities have been stimulated and supported and how these communities are succeeding in throwing off enemy domination. The Station has conclusively proved the importance of the cadre program to this "Other War." It has also shown that this program can be carried

forward from local to area victories as has happened, for example, around Quang Ngai city. Two years ago Quang Ngai city was an urban island in a Viet Cong sea. Now, in its environs, the Viet Cong are being pushed southward and ever farther away.

6. Political Intelligence and Action: In the political field, Ambassador Bunker relies heavily on the judgment, initiative and professional techniques of our Station and its officers. The Station is operating under his specific and detailed command and providing him the flexibility he needs in the delicate process of constitutional and electoral development. On the Ambassador's behalf we are developing discreet relationships and covert assets than can be manipulated to sponsor the emergence of what appear to the outside world as genuinely Vietnamese political initiatives, constitutional provisions and electoral platforms. This same network of relationships and assets will also help provide coverage of GVN political plans and intentions and early warning of political moves which would be counter to US interests.

7. Other Programs: While the manifold programs outlined above are massive by our Agency's standards, they do not comprise the whole of our Station's efforts. In addition to these programs, the Station is also carrying on other activities: [REDACTED]

1.3(a)(4)

1.3(a)(4)

IV. MAJOR PROBLEMS

8. The Police-Type Function of Civil Control: I do not mean to suggest that all problems have been solved; many still remain. We still have not properly organized the essential police function, i. e., we have not established a police apparatus capable of eliminating the Viet Cong's covert control of the hamlets and keeping the Viet Cong away once they have been forced out. A major effort in this field is being built around Ambassador Komer's "Infrastructure Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation" (ICEX) organization which is largely based on a Station proposal prepared at Ambassador Komer's request. ICEX is in its earliest stages and I do not think we have yet recognized the full scope of the staffing requirements that this Agency and the military will have to meet if the ICEX approach is going to work. Much needs to be done to improve the effectiveness and interaction of various Vietnamese components capable of taking direct action against identified infrastructure elements including

the Police Field Forces, the Provincial Reconnaissance Units (which we developed and control), the regular police and the Regional and Popular Forces. Much work must also be done on extending the impact of Revolutionary Development teams in order to permit the coverage of a decisive percentage of the total population. Various tentative efforts are being made along these lines such as the "Quarter Zone" activity in Binh Thuan province, the civil-military teams in Binh Dinh province, the hamlet self-defense elements and others; but both a conceptual and practical job still needs to be done in this vital area.

9. Revolutionary Development Follow-Up: It is also clear that some mechanism must be developed to ensure a proper follow-up of the special attention which has been provided by an RD team once the team leaves the hamlet in which it has been working, otherwise there is a pronounced tendency to fall back to earlier Vietnamese governmental failings which often contributed to produce the problem in that hamlet in the first place. This is primarily a job for Ambassador Komer, but the Station will certainly work closely with him in attempting to solve it.

10. Needed Organizations and Political Institutions: It is also plain that additional forms of popular organization, especially in the non-governmental field [REDACTED] 1.3(a)(4)

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must be developed in order to strengthen the fabric of Vietnamese society and render the Vietnamese capable of protecting themselves against Viet Cong probes, political as well as military. This is only one aspect of the fundamental problem of assisting Vietnam in its process of transition from government by mandarinal or military authoritarianism to government based on an engagement of the people in a common endeavor. Again, this is an overall American problem but one to which the Station can contribute substantially through the political expertise of its own officers

7.3(a)(4)

[REDACTED] to

help the Vietnamese in this difficult process of political evolution.

11. The Top Level Communist Target: Despite progress achieved, we still have far to go in upgrading our sources and in improving our production on the top policy levels of the Viet Cong, so that we can gain intelligence capable of providing the basis for strategic setbacks to the Communists in addition to providing accounts of the Communists' past activities.

V. CONCLUSIONS

12. In sum, though it appears to me that the war is by no means over and there are certainly fragile elements in the overall picture, it

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is very clear that my Soviet or Chinese counterpart's report must exhibit great concern over the Viet Cong's mounting problems and the steady improvement in the ability of both the South Vietnamese and the Americans to fight a people's war. My counterpart can quite properly ascribe a substantial share of responsibility for both Communist problems and anti-Communist improvement to the activities of our Vietnam Station.