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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA OPERATIONS MISSION
(Special Technical and Economic Mission)
TO CAMBODIA, LAOS AND VIETNAM

file Ackley
Correspondence

AMERICAN EMBASSY
SAIGON, VIETNAM
December 6, 1954.

Weekly Report - USOM Representative
Haiphong

Dear Mike;

A good bit of the news is originating in Saigon these days, and does not need repetition here - such things as schedules of shipping, priorities, and guesses on the future. The guesses on the future, however, can be made here also, and guess we do. We concur with most of the instructions that have come up, and action taken. The office continues to run well, with some notable improvements since I was in Saigon talking with you. You will recall I said MAAG would move over in the next office - that move has been completed, and it works fine. We have put a door up in the hall, making another room for the local staff (excluding Miss Que of course) and things are running well. I have talked with Miss Que as you instructed, and she is ready on one weeks notice to do the job you have asked of her. I have sent the radio as requested care of O'Neil, but you did not send up my two cases! Hope they are on the plane tomorrow. We have corrected and forwarded to you the amended vouchers, and this pouch carries a new batch. We are down to five thousand "P"s about, and suggest sending 10,000 more. The orphanage has been informed of the work in the south for them. Had dinner there last Saturday night. I suggest the move south be completed prior to April if humanly possible due to increasing pressures here and possible civil unrest. The voltage regulator is needed here to show the films. Unless you give me further instructions, I am taking no further action on forwarding it at this time. The Plymouth is being sent down on the next ship being loaded. I also will send a quantity of STEM furniture. I same STEM, because it is so marked, and not USOM.

Material

A big push is on to clear out all AEA material. Each Ministry is being approached this week to finalize lists, and move the items forward to the AEA warehouse area for staging. While we do not get priority on American ships, we are getting it away never fear. The next two months are the most important time we will have here, and you must ensure prompt action on my cables concerning what is to be shipped as well as take the action I suggested should you require Miss Que during this next two month period. We stand to save or lose well over 100,000 dollars on the efficiency of this office during this period. By the end of February I could release any highly qualified person I might have and "go it alone". Be sure and wire a reply to the Public Health policy. I would appreciate a specific reply on this irrespective of the document cabled yesterday giving overall policy.

I would also appreciate a ruling on the USOM or STEM furniture. Do you want it shipped south? Much of it is scattered around the city as you know to provide quarters for American personnel, and it is conceivable that we may have to write it off should we delay too long in its removal. As you know, much of it is well beaten up from its rapid movement from Hanoi.

The AEA warehouse has been dismantled and will be shipped. I have an O.K. on the shipping of the tar in small batches, filling up deck space where no more important stuff can go.

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picking

We have picked up the police trucks and they are in the Staging area, and Public Works items continue to flow in. More and more civilians are coming in, and I am directing them to proper channels, and assuring them of both the need for immediate action and that their items will be handled at the earliest possible date. I think this city will be a deserted city by mid March.

The coal situation does not look good up here. I assume O'Neil reported to you. If not, please talk with him. The "Boys" get the same reaction, one almost prepared to stake his intelligence reputation on the statement that the stuff will not go out. About a quarter of a million people get either direct or indirect livelihood from the mines, and force might be necessary to evacuate the material even if the company concurs which is not a certainty from here. I think the civilian evacuation will gain momentum as the movement starts. Reports come out of increasing dissatisfaction in Hanoi, and this helps of course.

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The fishing boats, which I saw Sunday thanks to the French Navy, must be sailed say all competent authorities here. To sail in the monsoon season is unwise, and the fact that this is the fishing season makes it highly doubtful if they will be willing to go now even if provided escort. I am afraid this move must be postponed till spring regardless of the instructions from Saigon asking for immediate action. The people are not particularly eager to go, and the only overture made has been by a few who are not representative particularly.

Refugees

The flow of refugees has slowed to a trickle, only 64 coming in yesterday. This is due to a number of reasons. One is the cold wet weather, another is the rough seas prohibiting sea pick-ups, another is the Viet Minh activity preventing movement. We are unable to do anything about the first reason, but are taking steps in connection with the other reasons. We are working out a pick-up by LST by night, a non French vessel, and being planned and executed entirely by the Viet Nameese. At one point along the coast an LST can come within 200 yds of the shore, and with high tide coming after midnight, it permits the converging of refugees after nightfall from a wide perimeter. This is not finalized yet, and I will keep you posted. Another scheme calls for the cooperation of the ICC in Hanoi. At a given time a group will gather at the cathedral in Hanoi and request refuge. The ICC can be on the spot and possibly get action and send them immediately by train to Haiphong. This must be a sharp operation as the Viet Minh police do not permit the congregating of large numbers. I am sounding out the Canadian ICC this afternoon on their reaction to such a proposal. I am told by Ham that he thinks there are 2 or 300,000 left that wish to leave. I have no confirmation of this from any other source - eith for or against such a figure. Blankets are needed as I told you in a telegram. It is decidedly cold up here believe it or not. I wear a heavy Navy jacket, and am none too warm. Using heat in the rooms now.

The boat (US) has been loaded too full lately, and we are limiting the number to 4,000 for shipment in the future until the bad weather is over and some can go on deck. The Commadore concurs with this. Meanwhile over 5,000 were air lifted this week, and the camps are not too full. We have about finished the camp at the new site - out near Pagode, and it will be a very suitable place - best of any. We are closing the one in town. On the tents, it is hard to find all the details of them. Sheel has 52, Pagode 152, the Park 53, and about 50 are up in the new camp. Fifty were whipped to Tourane, sixty three were blown down, and some destroyed in the typhoon, and about twenty were ripped one way or another. Twenty were sent to Hanoi, and it is thought these were returned. Some were lifted by the French I am told, but you may know about this. I am trying to salvage some torn tents by cannibalizing hers also torn. Another week should spot the actual losses.

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I might say that some of the tents that were destroyed were given to the Navy to cover deck loads and unless you instruct to the contrary, this policy might well be continued. For example, the Stem furniture is going on deck on the bed of a truck. It must be covered.

Well, that is the top of the news. We continue to hold regular conferences here, my room being a gathering place every evening for the MAAG and the Navy. Jones has moved into Hamelin's room, and peace and quiet reign in this outpost of democracy. Best regards.

R. H. C. C. C.

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