

OFFICE MEMORANDUM o UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

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Reading Reports
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TO : Charles A. Mann, Acting Assistant
Director for Operations.
FROM : William A. Dymaza, Formerly Acting USOM
Representative Central Vietnam.
SUBJECT : Report on visit to Province of Phu-Yên

DATE : January 5, 1955

A) SUMMARY - There has been remarkable progress in the establishment of government authority and in the maintenance of security in this province controlled for over 8 years by the Viet-Minh. Most of this success is due to the effective work of the Chief of Province and the District Chiefs, who have been using many Viet-Minh methods against the Viet-Minh. However, there seems to be no question that Viet-Minh agents are present and that they continue to be an important threat.

There has been practically no American Economic Aid, since the ill-fated operation Atlante. The principal needs in the province are limited relief supplies, reconstruction of roads and bridges, school construction, rehabilitation of irrigation facilities, more effective information and assistance in Public Health such as first aid kits, medicaments, malaria control, etc... I recommend that this aid be granted through regular projects and channels as swiftly as possible to consolidate the Government's position, for I believe that those who demonstrate that they can help themselves are particularly worthy of aid.

B) DETAILS - In order to observe the Government's program of pacification and re-establishment of administration on the spot, I made a trip to the province of Phu-Yên, which has been recently liberated from the Viet-Minh. I was particularly fortunate to have Mr. Khanh newly appointed deputy Administrator of American Economic Aid with me. Since Mr. Khanh lived for over 8 years in Quang-Ngai under the Viet-Minh and even served them in a high position for several years, until he was replaced for refusing to join the party, his judgment on the situation in the province of Phu-Yên was very useful to me.

During a period of 3 days, we covered three out of the four districts in the province, going from Tuy-Hoa in the South up to Song-Cau in the North, located about 25 kilometers from the boundary of the province of Binh-Dinh, a Viet-Minh regroupment area. Travel was particularly slow because of the poor condition of the roads; to get into some areas we used bicycles and also walked.

1) Reestablishment of Governmental Authority

For sometime I had received reports that the Chief of Province had made substantive progress in reestablishing security and governmental authority in this province, long controlled by the Viet-Minh. These reports proved to be largely correct. The Chief of Province and the district chiefs have established administration in most of the villages in the province and there appears to be more security in this province than in some of the provinces previously "controlled" by the Government, such as Khanh-Hoa (Nhatrang) and Thua-Thiên (Hue). The Chief of Province and the district chiefs deserve most of the credit for the progress made, particularly as there has been little in the way of precise guidance from the Regional or National Governments. The provincial leaders are an active and spirited group, who seem to spend much of their time in the field.

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Basically the Chief of Province is using some Viet-Minh methods against them. He is well familiar with these methods for he was in prison for two years and worked as a Viet-Minh leader for over 3 years before escaping. First, the Chief of Province and the district chiefs selected, trained, and sent out about 300 agents into the villages. Many of the agents, I understand, were anti-communists who had fled from Binh-Dinh (Qui-Nhon), the Viet-Minh regroupment area. These agents went into the villages talked to the people, listened to them, lived with them, and felt out the situation on the spot. After they gained the confidence of the people, they organized demonstrations for the Government and against the Viet-Minh; at these demonstrations the "people" denounced Viet-Minh followers. Many Viet-Minh agents have been put into prison; others have fled. Councils of Notables have been elected in the villages. Village militia units have been established. The local officials continue to stage regular meetings and rallies for the Government and against the Viet-Minh. I Witnessed several of these meetings attended by large numbers of people.

The Chief of Province has great confidence that governmental authority is effectively established in practically all of the villages in the province and that the Viet-Minh are no longer a serious threat. He says that he longer needs half of his agents or his civil guard units. This may be partly because he is having difficulty in obtaining funds for their salaries, and he would like to do other things with these funds. Personally, I believe that the Chief of Province is over-confident about the situation. In talking with some villagers, we found out that there continues to be some Viet-Minh activity. Many people seem to be adopting a "wait and see" attitude; others fear the Viet-Minh. The Viet-Minh have indoctrinated many of the people, and since Geneva, they have strongly emphasized that the Viet-Minh forces are only evacuating the area temporarily and will return in two years. We also heard that Viet-Minh are going under cover temporarily and are waiting for favorable opportunities to exploit against the Government. The fact that there have been incidents not long ago also shows that the Viet-Minh are not inactive. However, despite these reservations, the accomplishments under the leadership of the energetic Chief of Province should not be minimized; and it is commonly accepted that the most successful reestablishment of governmental authority in Central Viet-Nam is taking place in the province of Phu-Yên.

2) Brief Comments on Economic Conditions

The province is largely agricultural, with rice as the main crop. There are also some forestry, fishing and coconut growing (at Song Cau). While a few areas have the rare opportunity to grow three rice crops a year, rice production has declined considerably because of the deterioration and destruction of irrigation and water control facilities. Under the Viet-Minh, commerce and transportation were largely disrupted, and there was substantial destruction of permanent buildings. Otherwise, the population does not appear to be poorer or unhealthier than in other parts of Central Vietnam.

3) Brief Comments on USOM Major Fields of Activity

a) Agriculture - According to local officials, the major need is assistance in the rehabilitation of irrigation and water control facilities, which have been destroyed or deteriorated because of neglect. Distribution of fertilizer to farmers might be useful in increasing production, particularly where it is not feasible to rehabilitate irrigation facilities. Some of the farmers who have suffered from 8 years of war also need hand tools. There are a large number of fishermen at Song-Cau, in the northern part of the province, with little in the means of equipment and materials for fishing.

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b) Transportation - As a result of Viet-Minh activity and 8 years of war, the major highways have been cut up and all important bridges have been destroyed. The Vietnamese Army Engineers have done a very good job in opening up the North-South highway (route 1) and one or two other roads and in installing temporary bridges. Even the French commend them for this work. However, these roads are still in very poor condition. Some temporary bridges may not survive the next rainy season. There is a need to further rehabilitate route 1 and possibly a few other key roads so that civil transport and commerce will recommence. It has been demonstrated that as soon as transportation facilities are opened up, commerce is re-established and many people earn their earning in trade. Even in Vietnam there are a large number of people who depend upon trade for their living.

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c) Health and Sanitation - Outside of remnants of first aid kits provided during operation Atlante, there was practically no sign of American Economic Aid. We saw a small dispensary in Tuy-Hoa, which seemed dirty and in poor shape and lacked medicaments. We also saw the foundations of a health center being built in Tuy-Hoa. Sanitation was in a deplorable state wherever we went. The most important needs are medicaments, first aid kits, and malaria, health education teams, etc... A medecin chef is also needed in the province. The provincial officials stated that there were an adequate number of nurses available, who had been trained by the Viet-Minh and could be utilized for health activities, possibly after brief retraining. After we called the attention of the medical service in Central Vietnam to some of the needs, I understand that it has sent some medicaments, first aid kits, and a malaria team there. It would be desirable for someone from the Health and Sanitation Division to go on the spot to examine the situation in the province.

d) Education - As in all areas "liberated" from the Viet-Minh there is a very great need to reconstruct schools. Under the former Governor, Phan-Van-Giao, 1,000,000\$IC was allocated under project VII-CVP-7/b to construct an elaborate school at Tuy-Hoa, after its "liberation" from the Viet-Minh in operation Atlante. The Chief of Province has abandoned the construction of this school and plans to construct at least four schools with these funds. Besides school reconstruction, the most important need is probably mass or adult education to reduce illiteracy and also as an instrument of disseminating information.

e) Community Development - In some areas which we passed the people were particularly poor, and short of rice and cloth. There was a shortage of rice, because the rice crop had been ruined by lack of rain. I understand that the government is sending some relief supplies to the province under VI-VP-6/b. However, basically the National Government has not allocated sufficient funds to Central Vietnam under project VI-VP-6/b for emergency relief in liberated provinces. This is an important need, which should be met.

f) Information - While the information program can hardly be considered to be effective as compared to that of the Viet-Minh, there was more sign of information activities in this province than any other province in Central Vietnam that I have visited. (I have visited all of them except Binh-Thuan (PHAN-THIET). There were bulletins and signs lauding the government of president Diem everywhere we went. Also each community holds mass meetings regularly. However, much remains to be done in this field, for it appears that the Government Information Service cannot compete with that of the Viet-Minh. For one thing, there seems to be some difficulty in reaching the level of the mass of the people, and the material used is not always well-selected.

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In conclusion, in view of the progress made in pacification and reestablishment of governmental authority, Phu Yen might serve as a model for other provinces faced with similar problems.

Economic and Social aid is required to consolidate the gains made.