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100 Refugee Reports

TO : M.H.B. Adler

FROM : Randall V. Frakes

SUBJECT: Present Status of Resettlement of SVN Population in Long My District, Soc Trang Province.

Field Report No. 73-42

In the company of Mr. Luu, Ministry of Agriculture, I visited the District of Long My, Province of Soc Trang to note present resettlement of this area. The town of Long My has been partially rebuilt by returning inhabitants in the last two months. Ravages of war had leveled the buildings and reduced the town to nothing but foundations of buildings. There is access to Long My only by boat at present, since roads leading to Long My are destroyed. The shortest route to Long My is by jeep to Cau Mong, about 40 km south of Can Tho. From here the trip takes about 2 hours by boat along irrigation canals and the Cai River.

The road from Cau Mong to Long My, about 12 km, is destroyed by mine holes and there is an area about 100 meters long that is destroyed completely. There are also some bridges destroyed. The Soc Trang Public Works is now starting repair but it will take an estimated 4 months before this road is completed. There is a road from Soc Trang to Long My but it too is impassable for about 20 km, from Caitrau to Long My. In the Long My District there have been 10 villages built within the last 3 months, with a total population of about 50,000 people. These villages are: Thuan Hung, Song Tri, Vi Thanh (now a part of Kach Gia Province but to be made a part of Soc Trang in near future), Long Thu, Hoa An, Xa Phien, Vinh Tuong, Vinh Thuan Dong, Vinh Vien, and Hoa Luu.

With the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture a Rice Cooperative has been organized in these 10 villages. The local members of this Cooperative were elected at a meeting held at the time of my visit. Their hope is to market their rice themselves and cut transportation and handling costs now charged by various middlemen. The Chief of the District is the Commandant of the Vietnamese 1st Battalion who handles security and rebuilding in this area. He receives 500 piasters a month for this position as District Chief but it is not nearly adequate in relation to the civil responsibilities which he is required to assume.

The general program of resettlement in Long My appears to be going very well. However, I visited only the town of Long My, since there is no opportunity to visit the other villages except by boat. This requires an extended trip which was not a part of the arrangements for my visit. The attitude is good and there is evidence of much activity. However, the Commandant of the 1st Battalion indicates that the local people wait for the soldiers to show the way with all of the work before they join in. This indicates a need for some type of fundamental community development activity in this area in the near future. If any permanent and lasting rebuilding is to be accomplished, now is the time for it to start. I shall recommend to Mr. Kellerman of the Church World Service, that his organization seriously

ly consider this area as a suitable one for a project.

Some of the apparent needs at this time are as follows :

1. A positive program of news dissemination and information to counteract the Vietminh propaganda.
2. Two DDT spray units and DDT powder for the District. The VN Army has qualified personnel to man these units.
3. Additional drugs and equipment for medical care in excess of the standard first aid kit which have been distributed in each village.
4. A well construction program is necessary since all water presently comes from river and within a few weeks this will be salty. Wells were requested in a letter to the Chief of Province of Soc Trang dated December 28, 1954. Copies of the letter is attached to this report.
5. Wire, insulators, and other equipment for lighting is required. A large diesel generator has been delivered here for providing electric power in the 3 km area around Long My. Trained technicians are reportedly available to put this into use. However, there is no accessory equipment to make this extremely valuable piece of AEA property usable so it is sitting idle. The generator is still in the original crate and is guarded by VN soldiers at all times.