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MEMORANDUM FOR: General Foster Lee Smith

Col. Foster Lee Smith
Col. Foster Lee Smith
 Attached is an informal appraisal of the
 status of the current Accelerated Pacification
 Campaign. The memorandum was prepared
 in response to an NSC request and I thought
 that you might find it of interest.

Thomas A. Donohue
 Thomas A. Donohue

7 October 1970
(DATE)

Attachment

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7 October 1970

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Current Status of the Pacification Program in South Vietnam

1. The momentum in pacification achieved during most of 1969 has not been sustained this year. The slowdown has been the result of numerous factors, including a decrease in areas available for immediate expansion, the diversion of national attention to other pressing problems, the introduction of new and unfamiliar political and socio-economic objectives, a degree of apathy which accompanied the improved security situation, and in some areas intensified anti-pacification efforts by the enemy.

2. The basic strategy of the 1970 Pacification and Development Plan differed from that of the preceding year by concentrating on consolidating GVN control rather than on rapid expansion into new territory. The underlying purpose was to effect an attitudinal change in the population from passive recognition of GVN administrative control to active participation on the government's side in the political life of the country. The goal, originally set for the end of 1970 but later advanced to the end of October, was to bring 90 percent of the people within the A and B security/development category, with the remainder upgraded to at least a C category. To this end eight basic objectives were established: improving security; neutralizing the VC infrastructure; perfecting the PSDF; developing local administration; implementing the Chieu Hoi program; improving the life of war victims; establishing an effective information system; and building prosperity.

3. Progress during the first phase of the 1970 plan (January-June) was spotty, and actual regression occurred in a number of provinces, particularly in MR 2. Moreover, some of the recorded progress can be attributed to the absence of Communist forces in the border provinces rather than to GVN initiatives. When it became apparent that there was a general nation-wide letdown on the part of the GVN, Ambassador Colby

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convinced President Thieu that measures had to be taken to restore the previous year's momentum and to meet projected goals. Accordingly, a program was decreed on 13 June which called for a special pacification and development campaign that would run from 1 July to 31 October. The president directed that particular emphasis be placed on economic and social development, which is the main focus of the special program. In addition, the plan emphasized the People's Information program, active participation by village and hamlet officials and PSDF in self-defense, better coordinated activity and mutual support by Main Force, RF, PF, PSDF and National Police, rapid conviction of VCI and early judgment on VC suspects to reduce the detention center population, and special training for technical cadre at Vung Tau in order that they can assist in motivating the people.

4. According to the HES statistics shown below consistent, but not spectacular, progress has been made this year on a countrywide basis, with the exception of the month of April when a slight regression took place. It should be noted that the HES statistics are most responsive to the level of enemy activity. Thus, the relative quiet of the enemy military forces since this past spring is the prime cause of the progress in 1970. Significant intangibles such as the impact of terrorism and threats on popular attitudes, enemy proselyting efforts and VC penetrations, are not measured by HES to any acceptable degree, even though they might have decisive impact on long-run allied objectives:

1970	GVN (A, B, C)	Contested (D, E)	VC	Population
Jan	87.9%	8.7%	1.4%	17,642.9
Feb	88.5%	8.2%	2.2%	17,636.4
Mar	89.7%	7.5%	2.0%	17,723.6
Apr	88.9%	8.3%	2.0%	17,758.1
May	89.7%	8.1%	1.4%	17,789.7
Jun	91.1%	7.1%	1.4%	17,897.3
Jul	92.4%	6.0%	1.1%	17,923.2
Aug	92.8%	5.5%	1.0%	18,014.9

NOTE: Each month, a certain portion of South Vietnam's population cannot be evaluated; thus totals do not add to 100%.

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5. Despite the onset of the special emphasis program, pacification efforts improved only slightly, and the results so far have been mixed. In June, the Phoenix program met its monthly goal of 1,860 neutralizations for the first time this year, dropped to 1,646 in July, but increased sharply to 2,603 in August. The HES security/development score for the A, B, and C-rated population moved from 91.1 percent on 30 June to 92.8 percent on 31 August. The A and B-rated population moved from 77.1 percent to 78.5 percent in the same period. The territorial forces continue to show improvement and are meeting their strength goals, although performance remains uneven because of the leadership problem. The PSDF is not meeting its strength and training goals, but its performance is gradually improving. The program to expand the police is lagging, with a 31 July police strength of 88,200 against a 1970 goal of 122,000.

6. Political and socio-economic ratings are showing improvement primarily due to increased activities in village self-help programs and refugee benefit payments. The influx of over 200,000 ethnic Vietnamese from Cambodia has made dubious the 1970 goal of clearing all refugees from the rolls. Although Chieu Hoi results are running some 15-20 percent behind last year due to the slower expansion of the GVN presence into the countryside, the number of defectors is still significant. The People's Information program suffers from poor management, low quality cadre, and lack of funds, and is rated as poor in most provinces. Local administration has been strengthened this year by the holding of both local and national elections, the training of local officials, and the granting of more autonomy. More than 95 percent of the hamlets and villages now have elected governments and some 25,000 local officials had been trained by the end of June. Although distribution of land under the new land reform program has barely begun, the framework is being established. Some 4,000 officials are being trained, aerial surveys are being made, and payment of rent by the tenants is no longer required.

7. On the other hand, enthusiasm for accelerated pacification has been at less than optimum. To some extent this can be attributed to the fact that national and local leaders have been preoccupied with such things as student and veterans demonstrations, economic problems, the 30 August senatorial elections and the Cambodian problem. In some areas, local officials have tended to give short shrift to calls for a greater effort while enjoying the greater peace, security, and prosperity that has arrived in many parts of the country.

8. Except in northern MR 3, the diversion of Communist assets and interests to Cambodia last spring did not open up large areas of South Vietnam for exploitation by the GVN. The enemy forces utilized in Cambodia were already deployed in Cambodia or in the areas close to the Cambodian border, while the VC anti-pacification forces (local forces and guerrillas) remained in place. Moreover, the Communists in several provinces broke up their Main Force units into smaller components for use in a high-priority, anti-pacification effort. Some areas in South Vietnam suffered a decline in the GVN security posture due to the deployment of ARVN forces to Cambodia.

9. We queried our regional-officers-in-charge (Danang, Nha Trang, Bien Hoa, Can Tho) for their on-the-scene impressions of the special pacification and development program. Their replies follow:

a. Military Region 1. The accelerated pacification program was launched in MR 1 against a military backdrop that already had enemy and allied forces pitted against each other because of sizeable enemy efforts to push into lowlands. Here, the enemy took a severe beating on three separate occasions in the last four months, with RF and PF playing a significant and successful role each time. On the non-military scene, the pacification program continues to move ahead, albeit at a slower pace. An extensive land clearing program which is now some six months old continues to provide new land for settlers and a number of roads are being opened up to aid these new settlers get their products to markets and to give them access to coastal areas for expanded fishing efforts. A major impetus behind the haste in pacification efforts in MR 1 is recognition of the need to get as much done as possible during time remaining in which fairly sizeable numbers of U.S. troops are available to help in the overall effort.

b. Military Region 2. There are not many bright signs that the government's intended acceleration of pacification is yielding much in way of results in this region. This is particularly disturbing because the situation in four and possibly five provinces has regressed from the progress made last year. There has been some forward movement, however. An increase in pacification efforts in Binh Dinh Province has resulted from the deployment of ROK forces into a pacification mission. This was done primarily to offset the loss of U.S. forces and to release ARVN units to the Highlands to cope with the NVA. The same may be done in Phu Yen Province. Among

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other efforts to improve security in and around Dalat, the ARVN 53rd Regiment of the 23rd Division has moved into the area to conduct search and patrol operations. In the past two weeks 49 enemy KIA have been reported by the 53rd which is a drastic improvement over the past performance of this mediocre regiment.

c. Military Region 3. Available data suggests that in MR 3 the GVN has not taken anything like a maximum advantage of the situation created by the diversion of VC Main Force units from this region. MR 3 should be a major recipient of opportunities provided by the fact that the preponderance of enemy Main Force strength in MR 3 moved into Cambodia. Since June, enemy initiated activity throughout MR 3 has remained at a relatively low level with enemy efforts directed primarily in support of local forces and guerrilla operations against Vietnamization and pacification programs. CORDS, MR 3 and II FFV have pressed Lt. General Do Cao Tri, MR 3 Commander, to take advantage of the lull and move ahead with an accelerated pacification campaign. Three months appear to have been wasted in getting this campaign off dead center, with some progress being shown in September. Phung Hoang capacity to target the VCI remains spotty with overall results mediocre. The territorial forces account for less than 20 percent of enemy casualties and the leadership of RF appears weak and there is a lack of aggressiveness. Some strides are being made in respect to the PSDF, but these are accompanied by much self-generated ballyhoo. There is no noticeable improvement in the National Police effort in MR 3 except very recently in the field of resources control, again as a result of II FFV pressures. The National Police Field Forces (NPFF) remain virtually useless. Since May, an appreciable part of the Special Police effort has been diverted to screening repatriates from Cambodia, with a loss of momentum in the effort against the VCI. Food denial programs and the cumulative effect of some plowing appear to have hurt the VC more in MR 3 than any other pacification activities or programs.

d. Military Region 4. Of all the military regions, MR 4 has been taking the best advantage of the current situation to push its pacification effort. New and more effective province chiefs were appointed in some provinces, and the arrival of Major General Ngo Quang Truong as Region Commander

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probably is giving impetus to the GVN's accelerated campaign. He is establishing fire support bases throughout the Delta to harass the VC in their base areas and to deny re-establishment of VC secure areas in the future. An operation was started 30 September to clear the VC from Three Sisters' Mountains and ARVN has already occupied two of seven mountains (Base Area 400) and expects to occupy the third shortly. A marine brigade is currently operating in lower An Xuyen Province against Base Area 482 and other operations are planned against Base Areas 490, 470 and in the U Minh Forest against Base Area 483. In Kien Hoa province, one of the old VC strongpoints, a recent influx of ralliers is cited as proof of pacification efforts there. There were 772 ralliers in August and over 300 in September. In fact, Kien Hoa has led the country for nine straight weeks in ralliers.

10. President Thieu has the question of how to revitalize the accelerated pacification program very much in mind, but as of now he has not announced a revised program. His recent appointment of a new MR-2 Commander and several new province chiefs was directly related to this problem. He is discussing the situation with Ambassador Colby and, presumably action will be taken to tackle the problem with renewed vigor. It is probable that the current program will be extended beyond the 31 October date.

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