



EMBASSY
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

OFFICE OF CIVIL OPERATIONS

May 2, 1967

Mr. Jerome T. French
Office of Revolutionary Development
Viet Nam Desk
AID - Department of State
Washington, D. C. 20523

Dear Jerry,

Many thanks for your letter of April 19. One of my particular sins is that when involved in operations here in Viet Nam, I tend to forget that Washington even exists, and do not send back materials which you really should have. This actually did me a lot of harm in 1964 when I arrived home after going all out on the Rural Affairs program, only to have Stoney and other people curious as to what I had been doing all that time.

In regard to your specific requests, here are the answers:

(1) Handling of Returnees. The high level of returnees who came in September and March has declined to a more normal plateau of between 600 and 700, at the moment, and this has already eased our handling problem. As you know, we have budgeted sufficient funds in 1967 to double the capacity of all the centers in Viet Nam. At long last, this construction money is now in the provinces, and rainy season permitting, will go ahead and giving us the capacity to handle 45,000 returnees in six 2-month increments. This number, incidentally is what I undertook to set up as a target for our Chieu Hoi program for 1967. Last summer and fall, people criticized us for thinking too big and tying up good money, and more recently, they criticized us for thinking too small. Such is the "thrashing" of the beaucratic response, but we continue to hope to get in the range of 45,000 this year. Nevertheless, by direct order of Ambassador Porter and Mr. Kemper we have established a program to handle an additional 50,000 people (over and above the 45,000) who hypothetically should come in during 1967. This involved temporary shelters, and we are now processing local procurement to permit erecting such shelters to keep 50,000 people at one time. This is clearly excessive to our needs, but the capacity will be available for refugees or others.



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Procurement documents are now in the Regions, and I can anticipate screams from the people who will have to stockpile this lumber. We have also earmarked an additional 375 million Piasters with the program office, to take care of the various allowances for food, spending money, resettlement, etc.

(2) The Armed Propaganda Teams on the whole have performed with distinction. As you know, they come under the Chieu Hoi Province directors, the Province Chiefs and the appropriate District Chiefs for operational guidance. For one example, Major Ozaki, the MACV S-2 liaison in Danang just reported that the Hue Armed Propaganda Team had contacted and killed more VC in the month of April than the entire ARVN regiment in the same Province. You may be aware that during the operation in which Bernard Fall was unnecessarily killed, an Armed Propaganda Team was attached to a U. S. Marine unit. The Marines were pinned down by heavy VC fire and an APT member not only rescued the several Marines under fire, but also seized a Marine machine gun, ran out, slung it to a low tree and laid down enough fire to permit the Marines to get moving again. The assistance of the APT in providing continuous intelligence, sensing ambushes in advance and locating booby traps was outstanding. One of them also pointed out to Bernard Fall the mine which later killed him, but when firing began, he became confused and tripped the mine anyway. To my knowledge there was one case of VC planting an agent in an APT some months ago in An Xuyen. The culprit was apprehended. Nevertheless the Armed Propaganda Team, are unquestionably one of the great potential tools for use in winning the war in Viet Nam. John Vann has told me that when he was in Hau Nghia in the fall of 1965, the APT had the best combat record of any force in the Province, including U. S. In a little while, I will send you a copy of a paper on this subject and which we prepared for Wade Lathram.

(3) Vocational Training and Jobs. Recently, with strong encouragement from us, USAID picked up two former RMK vocational training facilities under contract. This facility has already begun training at the Chieu Hoi National Center, and we hope to have a team at all four Regional centers. These teams will also screen employees to try to find jobs for the returnees when they have completed their training. If this works out well, it will be a major break-through in the Chieu Hoi Program.



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It will give us a basis for a Psywar campaign which we need later in the year if we are to meet our 45,000 target. We should be reporting more about this later. The National Reconciliation Proclamation which was made public on April 19 has already indicated that it will be significant in helping us find jobs for returnees. A Chieu Hoi returnee has already been named as Director of the National Chieu Hoi Center at 17000 Piasters per month. We are pushing here the Kit Carson Program which we sold to Marines in 1966. MACV has just sent out a guidance to all U. S. units showing them how to set up similar programs throughout the country. We are convinced that it is not enough just to bring in Hoi Chanh. We must turn them around against the enemy. This is not difficult provided our side shows initiative. The Hoi Chanh are looking for a new place to "belong" and they respond with great loyalty and energy to good treatment and a chance to win approval on our side.

Of course we know that the VC has a program to penetrate the Chieu Hoi ranks, in order to legalize agents back in the hamlets where they would presumably begin to build new cells. Usually, these people are turned in by the Hoi Chanh themselves. Also, when a man comes in under the program, he is ostensibly ready to help with intelligence, information, writing leaflets, or in some other way, and if the man is really an agent and declines help in these ways, it promptly places him under suspicion. Finally, the most dangerous penetrations in Viet Nam are by those VC who have a completely clean record. Some months ago in Danang, three returnees who were employed on a daily wage basis by the local USAID office came to our American Advisor in the region and said that the USAID had just hired a real VC agent. The latter turned out, to have a completely clean record. The VC will not tend to use penetration agents for important missions who have already been identified as VC.

(4) The first several teams who were recruited in Binh Duong and Phu Yen have completed their training at Vung Tau under the RD program. Major Be, the Commandant of the camp, informed Ambassador Porter that these were the best students he had. These were to serve as propaganda units only, but since then, the RD Ministry has agreed to recruit five full 59-man teams, to be composed entirely of returnees.



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With a little luck, they will establish a top record and win approval for more of the same. One thing we have found may interest you. Lack of discipline is a prominent factor of Vietnamese life, and particularly among the youth. The Chieu Hoi returnees, who are between ages of 15 and 35 for the most part, have been among the few people in Viet Nam who have been living under an iron discipline for years. This means that they know how to carry out orders, and makes them top material for a variety of military and civil programs.

I had hoped to return to Washington in May for about 10 days to recruit people, speak at the FSI, etc., but Mr. Komer evidently preferred I remain on duty here. Unfortunately, I really could use a break of routine as I haven't left my job for over five months for a single day, and find myself getting increasingly stale. All the best to you and Vince Puritano, and please keep in touch.

Sincerely,