

MEMORANDUM

February 19, 1971

TO: VN/ND/RD - Mr. Roger Darling

FROM: O/FSI/VTC - Ogden Williams

SUBJECT: Your Comments and Analysis on the 1971 Plan,
dated February 18, 1971.

After developing some background analysis, it seems to me you make four essential points:

1. CORDS is not equipped to do development work, and USAID should play a more active role.
2. The 1971 Plan does not reflect adequately our policy of Vietnamization.
3. The 1971 Plan does not adequately face up to certain key issues which are internal to the programs, the latter being expressed largely in quantitative terms in the Plan.
4. CORDS has not adequately consulted AID/Saigon or AID/W.

Regarding some of the general themes developed in your preamble, let me first offer a few comments. Insurgencies occur in countries where "vacuum situations" exist. In countries which are internally viable politically and administratively, insurgencies cannot successfully occur. The problem in Viet-Nam since the outset has been how to fill the vacuums, political and administrative, left behind in the wake of the departing French. Every plan in Viet-Nam since 1954 has essentially been aimed, whether consciously or not, at filling these vacuums by providing (1) security, and (2) services. Security in Viet-Nam has had two main aspects: (a) winning the main force war (1965-1968), and (b) developing local territorial security. Our military forces successfully blunted the enemy's main force thrust. CORDS, and specifically the civilian component of CORDS, has done much to provide local territorial security by securing priority and resources for the RF/PF. Although the problem of RF/PF quality is always there, better equipment and increased numbers have unquestionably enabled them to alter the security situation in a manner favorable to the GVN. It is noted that, even where performance was poor, the very fact of increased numbers denied manpower to the enemy. Territorial security, then, has been the priceless contribution of CORDS to our effort in Viet-Nam.

Having made the above comments which relate to the past, I am now at the point where your paper takes off in the direction of the future. I am also at this point ready to comment specifically on what I conceive to be the main specific thrusts of your paper.

1. CORDS is not equipped to do development work. I agree. An emerging failing at the Viet-Nam Training Center is that we cannot, in the time allowed, train technical experts in the development area. We have been set up in the past to train generalists, who are now becoming increasingly irrelevant at the lower levels. Having said the above, I think you must now face the issue squarely as to whether USAID is ready and able to perform the development mission in the countryside. The issue is also raised as to how USAID would contribute to Vietnamese development without itself violating the concept of Vietnamization.

2. The 1971 Plan does not adequately reflect Vietnamization. I agree. As most observers agree, and as I very inconclusively commented to Mr. Nooter recently, there are too many Americans in Viet-Nam, including CORDS. The rationale now is for them to act as monitors, but I suspect the implications of the new role have not been fully thought out. How many monitors are necessary? At what levels should they operate? Are personnel being assigned to the field being prepared for the new monitor role, as opposed to the advisor-doer role of the past?

3. Certain key issues must be faced squarely. I agree, but would raise the question as to whether the specific 1971 Plan document is realistically where this would be done. I would certainly agree with you that the Plan is less ~~than~~ daring in this regard. For example, it would seem entirely feasible for the Plan to have called for not just 122,000 national policemen, but also for x-thousand national policemen with BAC I degrees or better, etc. This would have committed the Vietnamese to practical action towards solving the basic personnel quality issue you raise. It might have also been possible to say more about the quality of training of village officials, but I am not convinced that the 1971 Plan document is the place where this should be done. Surely, having established the requirement for training in the Plan, the content of such training would be the subject of other studies and another action.

4. The failure of CORDS to consult adequately with AID/Saigon or AID/Washington. I agree fully that, from here on out, the action in Viet-Nam is shifting from CORDS back to USAID, because of the evolution of the situation. I don't think AID/W can, however, plaintively accuse CORDS of inaction in failing to consult AID/W. AID/W might accuse itself of failing to insist upon such consultation. In a situation where AID/W provides much of the budget,

personnel and resources for CORDS, AID/W should find no overwhelming impediments towards asserting a stronger voice in mission policy in Viet-Nam. If, indeed, CORDS is not qualified to do development work, and the USAID is, then AID should insist on its own role. I suspect, however, that some of AID's reluctance is based on some misgivings as to its own readiness to re-assume the full responsibility which it used to exercise. As you know, there has been history for some years of the military in CORDS stepping into situations because of civilian default.

With the foregoing caveats, I agree fully with your thrust that the time has come for the developmental and modernization people to get more strongly into the action. AID should insist upon this, however, and not feel hurt because CORDS does not yield up the responsibility for these areas on its own initiative. As I see it, since the main force war was, at least for the time being, won, and since territorial security has in large measure been achieved, the remaining elements of the "vacuum-filling" process are principally (1) development of more self-reliant Vietnamese institutions from the bottom up and also from the top down, and (2) continued economic development. Obviously, AID has a predominant role to play in both areas if it is prepared to do so.

If you wish to route these remarks to other individuals who received your original paper, please feel free to do so.