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*N. Jr. A. Rouz was
member of Psywar team
from Hawaii dispatched
to Saigon to help
with Psywar course
for Viet Army*

MEMORANDUM TO LT. COL. MELVIN:

A/ Purpose: suggest methods of recruiting, training and utilizing special Scout-Ranger and Commando Companies to be composed of ethnic minorities from South and North Vietnam.

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1. Background.
2. Southern Tribes.
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Background: The mountain areas in South and North Vietnam are inhabited by various ethnic minorities which have lived in comparative isolation from the Vietnamese and are radically different from them. Called "Peuples Montagnards" by the French, these minorities comprise some 2 million persons.

2. Southern Tr.: The Southern Vietnamese minorities are located on the Plateaux (Haut Donnai, Darlac, Pleiku, Kontum) and on the Annamite Range North and East of them. Related groups are found in Cambodia East of the Mekong. Among the Southern tribes are the MAA, CIL and SRE (Kôhô) in the Ht. Donnai, MNONG and RHADE in the Darlac region, DJARAI in the province of ~~Plaine~~, BAHNAR and SUDANG in the Kontum area, HRE to the East of them. The Southern minorities, of which only the principal groups were listed above, are of Indonesian origin with Cham and Khmer influences from the East and West, respectively. Their languages are distinctive, unintelligible to a Vietnamese, their social structure of a strong family-village type, their beliefs animistic and their economy very primitive (dry rice and corn, slash-and-burn (rai) fields, hunting, little by way of home crafts, some plantation workers). Customs are different from the Vietnamese, and so is their behaviour. As a rule Southern minorities are very shy, suspicious of any foreign influence, easy to intimidate and yet basically independent.

3. Northern Tr.: The Northern tribes are located around the Red River Delta and along its confluents, and North of it along the Chinese frontier. A number of these tribes have immigrated from Yunnan and Kwang

Si at a fairly recent date and large groups of them still exist North of the Chinese border: this is the case for the LOLO, MEO, MAN (among the most primitive Northern Tribes) and tribal TAI. Others came south with the great TAI migrations and are closely related to groups now living from Southern China to Laos, Thailand and Burma (LAOTIAN TAI, PU NOI, THO, AK-KA, etc.); An important group, the NUNG, are probably related to the TAI group; the M'UONG, SSW of the Red River Delta, are very much Vietnamized. The Northern Tribes, of which the Muong, Nung and TAI are the most developed, live in even greater isolation than their Southern counterparts; their languages are mutually unintelligible, their customs vary from tribe to tribe. Social structure of a strong village-family type, tribal organization stronger than in the South; beliefs vary from pure animism to animism with Buddhist-Confucian superstructure.

4. Character: Common to all tribes -- in the South as well as in the North -- is a basic distrust of all foreign influence, especially Vietnamese and Chinese, and certain characteristics such as honesty, slowness in learning, especially in technological fields, very intimate knowledge of their respective countries (excellent trackers and guides) and timidity which makes them easy to intimidate and difficult to influence.

5. Milit. training: Ethnic minorities have been employed as soldiers by the French, and their combat record has partly been very distinguished. Among the Northern tribes used by the French are the NUNG, the MUONG and some MEO; among the Southern tribes the French established Mountaineer Battalions (B.M.) composed of SODANG, BAH-

NAR, RHADE.

M.VN: After the Armistice a number of Northern Mountaineer units moved South and are presently part of FAVN : one NUNG Division, 2 Btn (?) of MUONG, presently in the 4th Military Region (14th Light Div.) and some scattered Tribal Tai elements. They are employed as regular field or territorial forces.

S.VN: As to the Southern Mountaineer Battallions, the French withdrawal and the integration into FAVN has brought about a reorganization whereby the former B.M.were recently dissolved and from 50 to 70 % of their strength was transferred to the newly formed Territorial Regiments (Pleiku and Kontum) and to the 14th Light Division in the Haut Donnai and Datlac regions. A number of mountaineer soldiers were discharged and returned to their villages.

6. Milit.Capabil.: While present relations between Vietnamese and Mountain Tribes, especially in the South, are not very good and should be improved by a long range program (cf.special report thereon), there exists a definite and urgent need for greater participation of the ethnic minorities in the defense effort of South Vietnam. Due to the difficulties in integrating mountaineer elements as such (language, etc), to their particular weaknesses and aptitudes which distinguish them very radically from the average Vietnamese, rapid and successful utilization of the ethnic minorities demands that they be organized into small units with special missions tailored to their aptitudes. It is thus suggested that

mountaineer elements be recruited, trained and utilized as Scout-Rangers (Tham Bao) and Commandos within the shortest possible delay.

7. Mountaineers as Scout-Rangers: Scout-Ranger and Commando units made up of ethnic minorities will have capabilities which could never be attained by Vietnamese units. Their special aptitudes in these operations exceed by far those of any other group. In particular

(a) Scout-Ranger and Commando Units composed of Southern Mountaineers could do the following:

(1) operate undetected on the Plateaux (Ht. Donnai, Darlac, Pleiku, Kontum) and on the Annamite Range in a defensive situation; these areas were, are and will undoubtedly be further infiltrated by the Vietminh. Their loss would have irreparable consequences.

(2) operate in their regions in an offensive situation; their familiarity with the terrain could outweigh considerable Vietminh superiority in numbers and equipment.

(3) contribute in gaining loyalty and cooperation of ethnic minorities with Diem Government.

(4) among the specific missions which could be entrusted to Mountaineer units are the following: intelligence; detect, eliminate and prevent Vietminh infiltration; sabotage; special combat operations.

(b) Scout-Ranger and Commando units composed of Northern Mountaineers could carry out the same missions in the

strategically important northern mountain areas in an offensive situation.

8. Training progr., It is suggested that training of Mountaineer Scout-
in gen. Ranger and Commando Units be planned and carried out at once, and that the trained units be stationed in the Fourth Military Region and in the Second Military Region. Cf.No. __ infra. Training should be planned for 2 Co.of Southern Mountaineers, to be attached to the 4th M.R., and of 1 Co.of Northern Mountaineers, to be attached to the 2nd M.R.

9. Recruiting: Recruiting should be begun at once. The following procedure is suggested:

(a) for 2 Co.of Southern Mountaineers:

(1) in general: personnel should be recruited from existing units (territorial Regiments in the 4th M.R., 14th Light Div.) and from elements of former B.M.now discharged and returned to their villages. Recruiting should be carried out by special team with cooperation of local military authorities. Help may be obtained from local commanders, especially Cmdt Lu Phung Van, Arr.Cmdr in Pleiku, and Capt.Pham Van Suong, former 4th Reg.G-5 and now with 14th Light Div.in Ban Don.

(2) Officers: Mountaineer officers or Vietnamese with previous service and/or knowledge of the

area.

- (3) NCOs: to be recruited from former NCOs in Mountaineer Battallions, now serving with FAVN units or discharged. If poss.unmarried.
- (4) EM: either elements of former BM or new recruits. Unmarried.
- (5) In recruiting phase effort should be made to obtain elements of following tribes(N-S):
HRE, SÜDANG, BAHNAR, DJARAI, RHADE, MNONG, SRE. (Most qualified ones underscored).

(b) For 1 Co.of ~~Northern~~ Mountaineers:

- (1) In gen: personnel should, if possible, be recruited from existing units (Nung Division, Muong Elements in 14th Light Division). As for the rest recruiting should be done in Tai and other refugee villages (Dalat, Ban-Methuot, Pleiku). The following distribution is suggested: 1 Pltn Nung, 1 Pltn Muong, 1 Pltn mixed Nung, Muong, Tai and other available refugees. Ministry of Refugees should make a information as to location available of all refugee groups of Northern Mountaineers. Recruiting should be carried out by special team; participation or assistance may be obtained from Cmdr of Nung Division and from Cmdt.Gia, presently with 14th Light Division(Cmdt, Gia is a tribal chief of the Muong)
- (2) Selection criteria same as for (a).

- (c) NOTE: it should be remembered in recruiting personnel for 3 Co. that approx. 35 % will be eliminated during training, and that 10 % will be employed as training cadre or be given specialized training.

10. Pre-training: Prior to actual training the Companies should be grouped in Ban Methuot, Pleiku and Hue, respectively, and spend 3 weeks or more with the following missions:

- (a) Physical fitness tests
- (b) Physical Training
- (c) Vietnamese language instruction. Instructors to be obtained from Direction de La Guerre Psychologique, Min. of National Defense.

11. Training Training program should be carried out as follows:

- (a) Place: Scout-Ranger and Commando School, Nhatrang
- (b) Time: min. 10-week course, to begin on or about 1 March, 14 March and 28 March, 1956, carried on concurrently with Tham Bao training at Nhatrang school.
- (c) Training program: Scout-Ranger and Commando training, similar to Tham Bao (Intelligence Co.) program with more emphasis on Commando training.
- (d) Instructors: Nhatrang school personnel and selected mountaineer- officers and NCO who should undergo training with Tham Bao units starting 2 Jan. 56.
- (e) 11th week field exercise: actual operations against armed Vietminh groups in Pleiku-Kontum area.

12: Special training: After conclusion of regular training program a selection should be made among most successful students to form a 9-man squad per company which should undergo airborne training and then return to its unit.

13: Organization & Distribution: Companies should be placed at the disposal of 2nd and 4th Mil.Reg.Cmdrs (2nd M.R...1 Co.of Northern Mountaineers; 4th M.R.... 2 Co.of Southern Mountaineers). Companies should be maintained as such but organized and given additional on the job training in 5-man cellular teams to be employed by region commander as a strategic reserve; airborne squad should also form a separate team.

KONZ, Trim G-2

Distr:

Lt.Col.Melvin..1
 Lt.Palastra....1
 Konz.....1