

a/o 1 Sept 64

USOM- VIETNAM

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION:

The organization and operations of the Mission, especially in Counter-Insurgency, are being radically changed to conform with the ideas of the new Director, Killen. He emerges clearly as an aggressive, supremely self-confident commander, with little or no knowledge of Vietnam or of counter-insurgency, and seemingly little desire to learn. He is believed to feel that by sheer imposition of his will and force he can cause the Vietnamese government to function in ways almost wholly new and often beyond their capability -- and to be quite willing to cut off all assistance if they fail.

Specifically, he feels that substantially all commodity imports should be halted until the GVN is able to plan, program, execute nation-wide, and pay for the commodities which are not initial developmental support of capital projects. Further, he feels that no program should be initiated or carried on unless it is fully supported by the GVN. The Rural Affairs program is regarded as a crash giveaway bribery attempt, which interferes with orderly development of governmental responsibility. For this reason he seems to desire that the provincial tripartite committees be done away with, and full responsibility placed on the province chief.

Certain contradictions appear in his philosophy, as reported. On the one hand, Killen appears to favor strong centralization, both as regards the GVN and within USOM. On the other, he appears to favor the establishment of regional "Baby USOM's" each with a director of conventional type reporting directly to him. With, or through, whom these are to work, and how they are to be effective is not clear, since the basic concept seems to be to turn the Mission into a standard one, having relations with the GVN only at the highest levels. Supposedly the regional and provincial personnel (if any) should be older, more mature individuals concerned with administrative training and developing the governmental structure.

Interestingly, Killen has been sold the resources control idea, and wants a huge build-up of the police structure. In part this may represent an urge to use against Rural Affairs the ridiculous charge that its direct assistance programs have in effect channelled support to the VC, an idea long pushed by some members of BRIAM and the PSD.

Needless to say, the Rural Affairs personnel are most discouraged. The Logistics people, who have been transferred, want to resign. Most, if not all, of the old Rural Affairs senior personnel, as well as at least some of the new ones, stay on only out of loyalty to the original concept.

COMMENT: The foregoing is summarized from a number of sources, all knowledgeable, most obviously speaking with restraint. It is rated "probably true" but might well be rated "confirmed by independent sources".

30 Aug 64 -

Its cracking at the seams here. Not yet lost, but it looks bad. We know the criticisms of the Vietnamese. They have been told many times. But I'm most dismayed at the failure of American leadership here. And I mean starting with Taylor, who seems to think that by spending one or two hours a week with Khanh he can have any real influence over him. (A prior mistake is assuming that Khanh holds most of the power and can really commit the rest of the generals and the government.)

Hillen is a vicious direct strong man type, whom many people welcomed as a real leader. But the quiet Joe Brent. But so much the worse, because Hillen doesn't understand Vietnam, doesn't understand counter-insurgency as revolution, and seems strongly disinclined to learn. He is now in the process of destroying R.A. and its program.

H. W. Aier

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1 Sep 64

USOM is a fantastic and gigantic organization nowadays. Too many so-called experts coming in from Washington, and disregarding or pushing aside the people who really know what the score is, like Maynard and Navarro, and even the young FSO's. The solutions to the problems here are clear and obvious, but both Vietnamese and Americans continue to ignore them, and want to pour in more dollars and more personnel from the continental US. Naturally many Vietnamese are only too willing to let the Americans carry the ball, while they wait on the sidelines.

USOM has finally decided to withdraw support from Father Hoa and Hai Yen. The post has been there for 5 years, but one cannot go 2 kilometers outside it without getting shot full of holes. The combat expert who went there for some weeks decided it was really fraudulent.

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