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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

1. Colonel Liem telephoned Walton and stated that he would like to talk to him, whereupon Walton invited him to come over immediately. Upon his arrival, Liem stated that he was extremely concerned about the over-all situation in Vietnam. When asked why - in view of the considerably stepped up U.S. military aid - Liem stated that was one of the reasons. He was afraid that the U.S. was making the same mistake the French had made and that he hoped the U.S. would learn "before it is too late."
2. When asked for specific examples, Liem stated we were trying to drown the Viet Cong in hardware and that this could not be done - that all we were doing is arming the Viet Cong just like the French did. When asked in what way, Liem stated that there are many agencies bringing in weapons for various GVN units and organizations, with no centralized control.
3. When asked if hardware was not the answer, what was the answer, and exactly what should and could be done, Liem stated that first, it was necessary to arrive at an agreed upon concept for attacking the problem - a concept which was agreed upon by all GVN and U.S. agencies. Once this concept was arrived at, then a doctrine for carrying it out should be developed and then jointly implemented in a coordinated manner.
4. Instead of this, he said, there are half a dozen different, distinct, separate, uncoordinated activities going on to the point where the people controlling one operation are not only not coordinating with those controlling other operations, but not even notifying them. As an example, he pointed out the Civil Action Program which was developed without official notification to the Department of Defense.
5. He stated that, as another example, to point out how "ridiculous the whole thing is" was a recent request for thousands of tons of barbed wire. This, he said was arrived at by taking an arbitrary figure of barbed wire required to surround a single strategic hamlet and multiplying it by 15 or 20 thousand more; whatever the strategic hamlet figure is.

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6. Everybody has been wheeling and dealing to the point, he said, where Mr. Thuan, the Secretary of State at the Presidency, has thrown up his hands and said "I can't control them", evidently meaning the Strategic Hamlet people and the Civic Action program people. When asked who could control it, he said nobody but the President.

7. When asked if the President was aware of this confused situation which he reported, he stated that he didn't know, but he thought not, because it was difficult for the President to get a true picture of such a situation with everybody trying to push his own program.

8. He went on to mention the series of articles in the newspaper NGON LUAN which described all the new inventions which the U.S. was pouring into Vietnam to assist in defeating the Viet Cong, such as "Lazy Dog" and the Microjet Pocket Rockets.

9. This is again the common U.S. failure, he said. "You are a bunch of 'gadgeteers'. When will you learn that you can't beat the guerrillas with hardware."

10. It appeared to him, he said, that Vietnam's only hope would be that, when the Viet Cong take over, becomes imminent, U.S. troops will be brought ashore to land in North Vietnam and eventually unify the country.

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