

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : The Record

FROM : Bert Fraleigh, Former Deputy Associate Director
Field Operations, USAID/Vietnam

SUBJECT: Recommendation for Mr. Bui Van Loc

*Description of how
Rural Affairs Supply Sys-
tem worked into the
existence of Bui Van Loc*

DATE: 18 August 1967

This memorandum states for the record my personal knowledge of the outstanding service the subject Vietnamese rendered his country and the United States of America during the period of our working association in Vietnam from May 1962 thru the end of December 1964.

In my capacity of helping the U.S. AID Mission to Vietnam set up its Rural Affairs (Counterinsurgency) Program in South Vietnam in May 1962, it was decided to establish for the first time a counterinsurgency logistics office to insure the smooth receipt of AID supplies within Vietnam and their quick, honest and efficient movement from Vietnam's Ports to its provinces, hamlets and people.

The only precedent in Vietnam for such large scale movement of supplies was the Catholic Relief Services-Mennonite Central Committee, PL 480 Title II Programs managed for these American Voluntary Agencies by the Vietnamese Government's (CPA) Central Purchasing Authority. Other Vietnamese Government logistics efforts by its various Ministries were known widely to be both slow and subject to heavy diversions.

Anticipating the receipt in 1962 and 1963 of more than 250,000 M/T of USAID Counterinsurgency supplies on top of about 30,000 M/T of Volagency commodities, I approached Mr. Bui Van Loc, Director of CPA and asked him to consider receiving warehousing and moving to the provinces our new CI Program supplies promising him full AID support from our new logistics office if he agreed. He pointed out that he was not staffed for such a job and that there was no previous precedent for the size and scope of the task. Further, he said that if he took such a job he would immediately be pressured by Ngo Dinh Nhu and the Can Lao Party to divert supplies as well as to pay handling commissions to the Party Treasury. He said he would also be intimidated by the Vietnamese Military and other groups to pay "rake-offs", give employment and for many other abuses. He said that he would not yield to any such pressures and would, thereby, become the target of every sort of coercion, threat and abuse. He pointed out that he was already having great difficulty in running CPA procurement for the GVN and AID honestly due to similar pressures. He refused to take over handling our CI supplies.

After further study of potential Vietnamese resources for handling these supplies I was convinced that no other person nor agency possessed the remotest capability or integrity for the job.



I presented my findings and opinions to my immediate superior, Mr. Rufus Phillips, the Director of Rural Affairs (Field Operations), USAID/VN. He agreed with my conclusions and we both went to see Mr. Loc and asked him to reconsider his earlier refusal, pointing out to him that the success of the US CI effort in Vietnam and his country's resistance to communism might well depend on his decision.

He said that he was a Vietnamese patriot who had returned to Vietnam to help his country in the mid-fifties leaving a very successful career in France and that he would like to help us but that he had to consider the consequences for himself, his French wife and two children. We then assured him that we would try to protect him from any political consequences that might occur as a result of his taking the responsibility for us. Mr. Phillips and I gave this assurance because we believed it in the very best interest of the US Government feeling that no other person nor agency could effectively move AID's counterinsurgency supplies to the Vietnamese people. Mr. Loc said he would take the job if it were cleared with President Diem and if Phillips and I would give our word that we would help him leave Vietnam with his family should subsequent political troubles resulting from his acceptance arise. We gave him this assurance and Mr. Phillips prevailed on the Vietnamese President's Office to request Mr. Loc to handle AID's CI supplies.

It should be stated that during our search for a Vietnamese Agency suitable to handle these supplies, every person contacted in AID, the Volagencies and the GVN stated that Mr. Loc and CPA were completely honest and that CPA's sensitive procurement operations under Mr. Loc were the model for honest and efficient administration in Vietnam.

So, Mr. Loc took over handling our CI supplies. During the more than two years that followed he and CPA did an incredibly effective and honest job handling more than 300,000 M/T of commodities to every province and district in the country. There was never any port congestion, charges of corruption nor unusual transportation losses. However, almost from the outset, Mr. Loc came under the expected political pressures and the meanest sort of harrassment from various vested interests including threats on his life as well as his family's.

In 1964, as governments changed rapidly, each new government wanted the potential "Plum" of CPA procurement and transportation. Several times ARVN moved to take it over and only strongest US intervention forestalled this.

Finally, Loc felt his life was endangered and he asked to help him get him and his family out of Vietnam. He succeeded in getting his wife and children out but failed to get permission to accompany them. I had earlier advised the US Embassy in Saigon of Phillips and my commitment to Loc.

The Embassy Consular Section then assisted Loc in obtaining a US Visa. Loc then left Vietnam incognito on a cargo ship to Singapore. To follow up my personal promise to Mr. Loc given in the obvious best interest of the

United States Government. I worked with friends to obtain the necessary guarantees for his immigration to the United States. When, after arriving in France, he found that his cooperation with AID and the US Government in Vietnam had resulted in French Government retaliation against him.

Mr. Loc immigrated to this country nearly two years ago and has most recently been employed as a controller by the Catholic Relief Services of the National Catholic Welfare Conference in New York.

Mr. Loc is a man of highest integrity, intelligence and scholastic attainment. His immigration to the United States is a great gain to America. His unique working experience in Vietnam and the knowledge gained from it, coupled with his deep devotion to the cause of freedom, are assets which are desperately needed by the U.S. Government in its Vietnam efforts.

Concurrence:



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