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Creation of a Rural Affairs Liaison Officer (AID/W)

The purpose of this memorandum is to present for your consideration the creation of the position of Liaison Officer for Rural Affairs, AID/W.

The outstanding contribution of the USOM Office for Rural Affairs to the counter-insurgency effort in Vietnam should lead to the continuation of the Rural Affairs Program in Vietnam and its expansion to other difficult areas such as Latin America. The success of future Rural Affairs programs is based upon the recruitment, training and assignment of highly qualified personnel and close support from Agency Headquarters based upon informed, detailed knowledge of the requirements and problems of Rural Affairs in the field.

Experience during the past twelve months indicates that AID/W is not always fully aware of the particular problems encountered in administering the program and the requirements for its special category of personnel. The future success of a radically new program such as Rural Affairs hinges upon its initial impact in the host country. While detailed reports, photographs and visits are of assistance in meeting this communication problem between Washington and the field, it is proposed that a new position of Liaison Officer for Rural Affairs be created to truly and effectively meet this need.

The function of this Liaison Officer would be twofold; first to represent the Director for Rural Affairs in Washington, so that requests and problems originating in the field can be actively explained and followed up to a successful conclusion; and to serve, in an active sense, as a "contact" and storehouse of information for military, civilian or prospective host countries requiring immediate data on the Rural Affairs program in various countries. It would be essential that this Liaison Officer make frequent visits to the Rural Affairs field offices to maintain his knowledge of the most recent developments.

The individual selected for this position must have at least one tour of prior experience with Rural Affairs to include service as a Provincial Representative. Previous experience with the U.S. military establishment at a high level and some executive experience with the Department of State or comparable Agency would provide a much needed understanding of the "ins and outs" of government operation pertaining to the success of his mission in Washington. It is suggested that the creation of this position should precede the formation of any new Rural Affairs programs.