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INFORMAL MEMORANDUM

November 12, 1963

TO: General Le Van Kim

SUBJECT: The Province Chiefs

1. With the sweeping changes now being made in Province Chiefs, it might be helpful to you to have our observations on those, who in our opinion, were effective and truly interested in the welfare of the people in their province and were thereby able to win significant popular support. Am also including our observations on those province chiefs in the Delta who did the poorest job. Our provincial representatives have been working with most of these province chiefs for a period of 6 months to one year and it is possible that all of them (USOM provincial representatives) might have been fooled some of the time, or a few may have been fooled all the time, but not that all of them have been fooled all of the time.

2. Of those province chiefs in office on 1 November, the following appeared outstanding in sincerely devoting themselves to the welfare (security as well as economic and political well-being) of their people and in obtaining solid results in the pacification of their province.

(a) Lt. Col. Hoai - Phu Yen Province. Lt Col Hoai is one of the few province chiefs who could probably be elected to that office in a free election. He is honest and spent most of his time personally visiting the hamlets in his province and discussing local problems with the population. This, plus an effective hamlet improvement program which he strongly supported, are the main reasons for the generally high morale and rising pro-government sentiment in the hamlets. Although Catholic, he did more for the Buddhists in the province than the previous province chief who was Buddhist.

(b) Lt Col Phat - Kien Phong Province. Col Phat was the most effective province chief of the previous government in the Delta area. An excellent administrator, he is the only province chief to have made a five year development plan for his province. He has been accused of corruption in the past (particularly by the Ministry of Civic Action) but no evidence has been observed by our provincial representative. He is one of the few province chiefs (the other being Lt Col Chau) who has, in our opinion, made any solid pacification progress in the Delta over the past year.

(c) Major Dinh - Kontum Province. Major Dinh respected and liked the Montagnards and they reciprocated. He has handled the Montagnards better than any other Province Chief except possibly Major Hy in Binh Long. The hamlets in Kontum are the best, in terms of will to resist the VC, of any primarily Montagnard province in Vietnam.

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(d) Major Chi - Phu Bon Province. Major Chi, while not as sincerely devoted to the Montagnards as Major Dinh, has nevertheless been a forceful and energetic province chief who has handled a difficult situation well and has built up, from almost nothing, a solid base of support for the government in Phu Bon.

(e) Major Hy - Binh Long Province. One of the best province chiefs in his devotion to the welfare of the Montagnards. He treats them with respect. He is a forceful and dynamic administrator, and an excellent military leader. He is decisive, and honest and frank in his dealings with Americans. Under his administration, the Binh Long situation has greatly improved from what it was under the previous province chief who refused to count the Montagnards as people.

(f) Lt Col Khanh - Ninh Thuan Province. Lt Col Khanh was an excellent administrator and was able to put together and operate a good provincial staff. He understood the hamlet program and the spirit of resistance is generally high in the hamlets in his province. He was very interested in pushing hamlet development. His main weakness was a lack of feeling for the Montagnards who were, to a certain extent, neglected by his provincial administration.

(g) Lt Col Chau - formerly in Kien Hoa. Lt Col Chau deserves special mention as he was the most gifted, imaginative, and dynamic of all the province chiefs of the previous regime. The heart of his pacification program was to give the people faith in their government and it was succeeding in Kien Hoa when he left. He is completely honest. He was the only province chief with an effective complaint and action system in his province and practically the only one not afraid to tell Saigon the truth.

(h) Also worth mentioning is Major Thao, previous province chief of Vinh Binh, who was loved by the people of the province but hated by General Cao and the Delegeue, Vang, both of whom helped to get rid of him. Major Thao was effective.

3. The province chiefs in the Delta, as of 1 November, who were the most ineffective, or in some cases, harmful, are as follows:

(a) Lt Col Phuoc in Vinh Long. His methods are brutality and repression, covered by profuse expressions of interest in civic action. He is probably most detested province chief in the Delta.

(b) Major Binh in Chuong Thien. Knows no methods except repression and forcing people to relocate. Is a liar and is dishonest.

(c) Lt Col Minh in An Giang. Made apparent progress through using repressive measures but was basically dishonest and unconcerned for the welfare of the population.

4. Lt Col Chieu in Ba Xuyen. Intelligent but an erratic administrator. He is not basically interested in the welfare of the population and was one

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of the most flagrant of all in building large numbers of "phantom" hamlets in order to look good in the eyes of Saigon. There is some circumstantial evidence that he is not honest.

5. Major Di in Phong Dinh. Ineffective and an incompetent administrator. Circumstantial evidence of dishonesty in his administrative staff, probably not known to him.

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