

Final 1971 letter
describing McClellan
w/ Dr Killen

August 30 64

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program a crash effort to give away commodities with the intention
of bribing rural people for support. He says that most of our
programs were not wanted by the Government of Vietnam so we
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of Vietnam take them all over and only carry on those it wants.
Sol Silver is behind a lot of this thinking as is Killen's
apparent idea to cut down US Aid here as quickly as possible in
order to impress somebody in Washington, who we don't know.

He wants the Vietnamese to take over all logistics and also
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which is not for capital development of initial nature. We have
had our Logistics staff detached and put in USOM/Logistics under
Col. Thomte. Hawes, Mc Nerney and Milligan all want to resign
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USOM negotiating with the government on the highest level and
not helping it operate or insuring that it operates. He is
opposed to the Provincial Committee idea and doesn't think our
Province Reps should be involved in signing documents or shipping
and distributing aid. He thinks they are too young and are thus
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August 30 64

Dear Rufe:

Hope that on arrival this letter finds you in Washington. Also that you will keep me protected as the source of the info it contains unless you think you can trust Stoneman.

The situation here is critical and the situation within USOM is unbelievable. It looks like most of our hard work and sacrifice here is going down the drain. It is almost as if the John Cools have taken over once again. The whole Rural Affairs operation is under question and is being disorganized. This is shattering morale and robbing the US of its one really effective and successful effort in Vietnam.

Neither Ben nor I have ever been consulted by Killen on Rural Affairs, its history or its operations, policies or objectives. Killen has never once gone to the countryside to see our work and isn't even interested. His one trip out of Saigon to my knowledge was to Cap St. Jacques for a GVN military/civil conference, yet he pretends or assumes he has all the answers.

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Killen is also at war with Hurt his deputy. He is almost totally oblivious to the political situation here and again just doesn't seem to care. He has extraordinary self-confidence and believes that by sheer force of will he will get the GVN to do things in the next few months it has never been able to do before. ie, program, move, plan, pay for and carryout all steps of an efficient government countrywide. Till such time he has ordered a halt to all commodity imports except a few he personally approves. This hits CI the hardest. Those originated before he arrived will still go through but after most of the pipeline will be broken. He has also set a ceiling on personnel which is 140 for Rural Affairs (which I agree to) but Washington goes blithely ahead recruiting more.) and other offices are under the same gun. He has brought in his own team of hatchet men so morale is way down. You can check this out with Joe Harutani who has just gone to Washington and is a very stable guy.

He is rough on George in meetings and conversation but still a little wary of him. The reason seems to be that he wants to go to Washington and clarify his stand on Rural Affairs and the negative aspects of our efforts which he claims are that we have distributed indiscriminately thus outfitting the VC. He tried to change our name back from Operations to Rural Affairs or Rural Coordination a few days ago but slowed down on that one after the news leaked and we put the onus on him for the act. He has hinted that what he really wants to do is to set up USOM Regional Offices staffed with older, mature men who will in turn staff older, more mature men at province levels who will be mainly interested in administrative training and "building" the GVN government structure. He is against decentralization of government such as we have achieved so successfully. However, he is very clever so that if you hear him talk, and you realize that he talks differently depending on who he is talking to, you won't get the impression clearly of his real thinking or plans, you will have to judge by his actions, and innuendos and your own intuition and observation.

He is a bug on resources control and thinks this the only answer. So he wants a huge build up of the police forces. I think on this one he realizes the military has not delivered so he wants to have his own army which he an substitute for military inadequacy. This may not be a bad idea either since it looks so hard to change the army.

The last two days he has tried to con Tanham, and seems to be succeeding slightly, by telling him that Operations should do more thinking and planning and evaluating. Since George came from this kind of outfit and this has been his whole experience, he agrees with this concept. So we spend most of our time cranking out think papers which nobody reads plus justifications of Operations work, which nobody reads. Rufe, this is a real tragedy. Both you and I put our hearts and health into this work as did our whole field staff, and now to see this wonderful effort which has gained strength and results to this very day being undermined is too much for me.

I am 100 percent convinced that what we accomplished here has been almost miraculous and unprecedented in AID experience, so am not willing to see it or Vietnam go down the drain with it. I have talked to most of our people who have been here so long and understand it and they agree to the man. George and Sam also agree but not so passionately because they don't understand it so clearly. Len is 1000 percent with me.

The next two or three weeks will be critical because Killen goes to Washington to sell his new look. We want Tanham to go with him but Killen only agrees that George can go after he goes. This means that on the Washington side there is probably only one man between Killen and collapse of our programs here and that is Stoneyman and God knows how strong he can be in the face of all this. Incidentally, we believe that Cody goes down the line with much of Killen's thoughts. Killen's thoughts in turn represent the sort of new look in AID which is the cold hard dispassionate look which says let 'em sink or swim and has none of the friendly personal element in it. There is a lot to be said for that outlook if it could be projected in a friendly fashion to the recipient countries but it is strictly impossible for Vietnam in its present condition or until the war is over.

Incidentally, George has taken a dislike to some of our old boys which is very unfair considering their sacrifices, George Melvin is a case in point. We know George's weaknesses but he doesn't deserve this. I am so glad I came back here only because I can help protect our old fellows and also fight for the cause. However, this is going to be a dirty fight which distracts us from our main mission of winning the war, and it may cost me my head. But it is for principles and I am ready. However, this report to you is for your own use and I wouldn't want to be quoted on it yet. But I think it important that Stoney be tipped off. Maratni planned to do it. Stoney must know before Killen hits Washington and others who can do something must be ready too. Let them listen to what Jim has to say but let them be forewarned of its import and ramifications. On your side you must be careful too for you are not in the government now. Writing to you like this would be cause for dismissal from AID so don't compromise me at this time. If I am going to get out of it it should be at a time when the getting out can be dramatic and used for scoring some points. One thing you might suggest to Neil Peterson or Bill Connell in Humphrey's Office is that he make a quick trip out here ^{before} ~~but only if he spends some time with us and it doesn't bring Coldwater out too~~.

Frankly Rufe, I think about the only thing that could save USOM now and make it really useful in these days of intensifying struggle with the communists would be your own return here as Director or Special Director for Rural Affairs. George would be very happy to get out right now if he could save face. Sam is a staff man and doesn't have the grasp. Len is terrific but tired out and ready for Home Leave. I am feeling quite good and working 60 or more hours a week trying to hold operations together. Len has been sent back to first Corps to replace Culley who goofed completely. George sent Len there against my advice. But neither Len nor I are being used for making any ~~big~~ policy now and we never see anybody in the Embassy.

In fact, the Embassy is completely out of touch as far as I can see. There is no Truehart Committee and no real planning and operating at the operating level. Boy, military men are really narrow and politically insensitive.

Khanh has now inherited Diem's mantle and has become an anathema to the masses. The communists have exploited the students and religious groups and are in Thu Duc so that hamlets only a half a mile from the Vinatex mill are insecure in the daytime. Frankly, the situation has probably gone beyond the point of return and civilian and military morale is at rock bottom in Saigon and in much of the delta. Where there are good province chiefs some of the provinces are in much better shape than Saigon now. Hué has been taken over by the students and professors and they are well organized and the strongest force in the country outside the military. They voted to secede a few days ago and that is not beyond the realm of possibility if political stability elsewhere continues to deteriorate while the US fiddles here.

My own analysis now is that the only one with any popular support now on the horizon is Big Minh who is still known as a poor administrator. He could come in now and if we made some continuing to passes toward the north, probably rally the people at least for a while. By passes at the north I mean SEATO or US action to seal off the line along highway 9 or the 17th. parallel or further north, such as our Bay of Tonkin reaction.

But to land US combat troops here to try and stabilize the south or hold it against the VC would probably turn the whole population against us. On the other hand, we might bolster the Army here by sending in men to fight with them in their own units.

Actually Hué, what I wish you could discuss with Humphrey's boys and Ed is that we immediately organize with the Vietnamese a joint peoples ~~prosperity~~ Prosperity program Commission to prosecute the pacification program and the socio, political and economic program. This commission should be like the JCCR was in Taiwan but wider in scope to include at least direction of the para-military forces as well as the economic and social aspects. US commissioners could be Ed and yourself while the Vietnamese could put it three top people. With appropriate publicity this could be the rallying point for the people and the idea and cause for which they might slowly commit themselves. Humphrey was right when he said that without a cause or program you can't win in Vietnam.

This is probably our last chance here and this idea should be sold in Washington now. It would offer hope of being the one way of stabilizing the GVN and capturing enthusiasm and rallying support for a comeback. Our Rural Affairs program could be plugged in immediately. Our present, scattered, undynamic and divisive efforts directed by fuzzy-brained, egocentrics, cannot win.

You will be glad to know that the rice seed and fertilizer program have been tremendous successes except for the fertilizer handled by the commercial interests. Selfhelp is really moving and things in many provinces are going ahead though the boys in Col. Loc's office

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still whip out their conflicting and limiting instructions daily. Fact is that the Provincial Governments have become very active in many provinces largely due to the dedicated pushing of our Province Reps. The technical divisions are really out too with the exception of Public Works. Dunn's well-drilling has been a great success and the windmills are really turning too. If this Saigon Bureaucracy would really give a time to work we would be even more effective in the rural areas where it really counts.

Well, do you have a job for me either if things require I really fight it out here? I am casting my bread on the water right now. I am going to write to Stoney asking him about the possibilities of transfer. Otherwise, I will think about leaving.

I feel very sad about what is happening; but let's not quit fighting yet. Try to push through that Boing Commission idea // that may be the only real hope and the last chance to pin our colors on a winner. US prestige is on the line and is being badly tarnished.

Jean is here and sends her best. Our best to you and Barbara. I am sending a copy of this to Bo so he can file parts of it if you are not in town....

Bo: Don't compromise me and remember that discretion and valor bit..... Saw your last letter to Len... Now you know why we have not been writing.....

Mike Dunn will be back soon. His advice is that we should get off the Lansdale kick cause nobody out here on the US side and few in Washington can buy it. OK, then lets try Rufe again.....

After a few more weeks like this last one I think that Taylor and company will be willing to buy anything. Our best to Mrs. Bo and Mimi....

Keep up the fight and write the sub

Bob

me.

might

most difficult situation and the best to do is to be critical and objective and not be afraid to speak your mind.

that you will be protected as the source of the info if you do this.

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for me to do