

## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Len Maynard, Acting AD/RA

DATE: 14 December 1963

FROM : Earl Young RA. 

SUBJECT: Developments in Long An Province

The personal commitment of Ambassador Lodge to assist in the Long An rescue operation has had immediate and dramatic results.

The meeting called by the Ambassador on December 8th was a fact-finding session, designed to accomplish two purposes. The first was to provide the Ambassador with a more complete understanding of the situation in the Province; the second to determine if the Province could be saved, and if so, how.

The military and political situation presented to the Ambassador was that explained to you in the November monthly report and various subsequent memorandums and conversations. It was, and still remains, extremely grave. The Ambassador was informed that the future of the Province would depend upon the extent and ~~immediacy~~ of outside aid. The priority and sequence of problems and their solution was given as follows:

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Solution</u>
(1) Destruction of the entire hamlet program and Viet Cong control over the majority of the Province	(1a) Additional military units sent immediately to the Province to halt the impending VC takeover and protect the remaining hamlets
(2) Waste and improper use of those units already in the Province who could be, but are not, making a significant contribution to the program.	(2a) To encourage the Vietnamese military staff and commanders to actually follow the advice of the US MAAG advisors in such areas as small unit night operations and assistance to hamlets under attack
(3) Support, both active and passive, of the Viet Cong by the majority of the population in Long An Province	(3a) A detailed, professional, family by family survey in every hamlet in the Province to learn the reasons for this attitude and then correct it

The Ambassador gave his unqualified support and requested that a plan incorporating the civilian agency efforts be drafted and delivered to him. He further instructed his personal assistant, Mr. Mike Dunn to go to Long An and review the situation on the spot. The results of Mr. Dunn's inspection are detailed in the Trip Report for 9-10 December 1963.

The effect of the Ambassador's interest and support became apparent within two days. Both MAAG Advisor and Province Chief were called to Saigon on Monday to discuss the situation with their respective organizations.

- a. The Long An CLEAR AND HOLD plan developed previously in response to urgent pleas from the MAAG Advisor but never fully approved or implemented received the personal attention of the ARVN III Corps Commander. He decided to assign the operation of this plan directly to III Corps. The Vietnamese language version of this plan is to be completed by Dec. 25th. The Corps Commander has requested GVN JCS to make Long An a Special Zone with military operations under the Airborne Brigade Commander.
- b. The Corps Commander came to Long An to discuss the situation personally with the Province Chief, and based on his briefing, did the following:
  - relieved three district chiefs
  - replaced them with aggressive, experienced officers
  - ordered one battalion of airborne forces to proceed immediately to Long An and requested a second airborne battalion to operate with the Eagle Flight, both to work in Long An until March 30th
  - attached the 2nd Battalion, 11th Regiment directly to Province control
  - ordered the 42nd Armored Personnel Carrier (M113) to Tan An
  - ordered the 22nd River Boat Company to work in Long An
  - ordered elements of 11th Regiment to conduct operations on 12 December in conjunction with the airborne battalion and the Eagle Flight

The purpose and immediate value of the airborne brigade is to prevent a Viet Cong take-over. The military operations now being conducted should accomplish this task if conducted efficiently and with dispatch. This operation must not be confused with the CLEAR AND HOLD operation required to afford permanent security for the hamlets and eliminate Viet Cong influence throughout the Province. The Provincial Committee are of one accord on the sequence and planning for the Joint Task Force Operation.

Mr. Bumgardner, Mr. Rosenthal and Mr. Ahern have arrived in Long An to represent their respective agencies. Close coordination with MAAG and Province officials has prevailed and the contributions of these gentlemen to Phase I -Survey- has already been significant. A special report on the USIS findings in the Province is being submitted separately. A complete plan for Phase I of the Joint Task Force operation will be prepared by USIS and submitted by 18 December. Survey activities will actually begin on that date in selected hamlets and secondary schools in the area. Three survey teams are planned, each guided and trained by a Vietnamese employee of USIS and staffed with very specially selected Provincial Information Service or Hamlet Construction Cadre. A total of 15 personnel will be required, in addition to Mr. Frank Scotten, who is being assigned as permanent USIS Representative.

The immediate response by the Vietnamese Government to the Ambassador's request, the full support of all American agencies and complete cooperation of the Province Chief indicates a great opportunity to defeat the Viet Cong on their home ground with their own weapons, if we can but grasp it. Success on the scale we anticipate in this Province can really mark the turning point in Vietnam.