


UNCLASSIFIED

LONG AN PROVINCE 

24 February 1964

Month covered by report 1 January to 24 Feb 1964

1. General Narrative on Progress.

The month of January presented the first opportunity for optimism in the past twelve months. Three battalions of paratroops sent by special request to Long An have effectively prevented a military take-over by the Viet Cong. January 15th marked the official beginning of the pacification plan designed to regain both military and political hegemony over the 219 rural life hamlets previously established by the Government.

The joint pacification effort described in detail in previous reports has now been in operation five weeks. Eight hamlets in the Tan An Subsector have been occupied by military forces. These military forces, while not actively participating in civic action projects, have at least avoided unfavorable conduct and provided the protection for which they were requested. Four teams, each composed of Provincial civilian technical service personnel are accompanying the military units and have subjected each of the eight hamlets to varying degrees of reconstruction, civic action, census, medical assistance, interrogation and propaganda. Something less than satisfactory results have been obtained from these teams thus far due to inadequate orientation, supervision and leadership. The Province Chief has caused a five day cessation of the pacification operation to permit reorientation and retraining of the civilian cadre.

The implementation of the USOM program has gotten off to a slow but adequate start. Material assistance requested by hamlet residents through the medium of the USIS survey has been inaugurated in four hamlets. This includes three bridges and a medical station. The chief reason for the initial delay was the contractor's failure to deliver materials on time and the lack of skilled labor to do the actual construction. Since the first construction efforts were attempted prior to the end of the harvest season even unskilled labor was at a premium. The annual TET celebration caused an additional week's slippage. It must also be stated quite frankly that the Vietnamese farmers are not eagerly waiting to begin work on self-help projects which they themselves requested during the course of the survey. A general feeling of apathy both for self-improvement and conduct of the war exists in Long An Province. Application of American standards or incentives to the Vietnamese farmer will only result in frustration. This is going to be a long war.

Highlighting a serious deficiency on the Vietnamese side is the failure of the psychological warfare and information program. It has been established that Viet Cong success in Long An is the direct result of Government neglect. Communist political and psychological agents have infiltrated literally every community and hamlet in the Province, offering a strong, positive program to

follow victory by the National Liberation Front. At the same time the VC have given widespread publicity to the Government's failure to support the hamlets. Estimates are that more than 60% of the Province population of 385,000 have been strongly influenced by this Communist propaganda. In spite of this knowledge of the enemy's tactics there is a general aura of disorganization, ineptness and lack of objective planning surrounding the Provincial Information Service (VIS) and lack of coordination and cooperation between all elements, military and civilian, having any responsibility in this field. Even very minor material benefits, if properly exploited, can have great impact on a population that lost contact with the national spirit three governments ago. While everyone is agreed that the voice of the Government must be brought firsthand to the people, there is still no agreement as to who, when and how. Given present resources, it does not appear that sufficient hamlets can be reclaimed prior to the beginning of the next rainy season (late May or early June) to make a sufficiently deep inroad into Viet Cong territory. Therefore the new Government's policy of support for the hamlet people and equal justice must be pushed far out into Communist controlled hamlets to let the people know that while it may be several months before an ARVN airborne unit arrives to make their hamlet secure again, it will come! The construction of schools, maternity clinics and bridges must be publicized throughout the Province, as well as the elimination of corrupt officials. This "bow-wave" of favorable propaganda can induce the people to hold out just a little longer.

The lack of planning and coordinated support placed at the door of the Information Service extends with equal condemnation to the other technical services at both Provincial and National level. While health, education and public works have integral value in themselves, their primary employment in Long An and elsewhere should be as a weapon against the Viet Cong, i.e. winning the loyalty of the people to the national government. From all appearances these services plan for and conduct their individual programs with complete disregard for the existing political and military situation. Specifically in Long An Province the technical Provincial Service Chiefs' were almost unaware of the Long An Pacification Plan and their very real contribution to it until the USOM Technical Division representatives were dispatched to the Province for that purpose. It would appear that the higher echelons of Vietnamese Government from Province upward should have planned for and coordinated their civilian component activities to fully support the Long An operation. While the USOM Technical Division representatives have in most cases brought their Saigon counterparts to the Province the counterpart's reaction has been that of a friendly well-wisher, rather than material, technical or planning guidance to their subordinates in the Province. A request has been made from the USOM Rural Affairs Office to all USOM technical divisions requesting that they formulate a plan for their area of interest to be implemented by the Vietnamese at national and province level after GVN concurrence. The pacification plan has a sound basis in fact. Its success in the final analysis will be based on the motivation and competence of the Vietnamese who must carry it out.

The recent change in the configuration of the National Government has resulted in some delay and confusion at Province level. The Province Chief, Major Dao, having been personally associated with members of the former military junta is highly suspect by the new regime. The implied U.S. support of Major Dao and the public attention focused on Long An has served to retain him in his job. To reduce the authority and influence of Major Dao a Sector Commander -Major Hao- was appointed by Saigon, to control all military (non-ARVN) forces in Long An. In addition, an overall Task Force Commander in the person of Col. Vinh, Airborne Brigade Commander, has been added to the chain of command. Major Dao feels very unsure of his continued office, and is further troubled by personal differences with the Sector Commander. The U.S. MAAG Advisor is singularly unimpressed with this Sector Commander, both by past reputation and present conduct. The most feasible solution would appear to be an entirely new Province Chief who would have the confidence of both the Vietnamese and Americans, thus replacing the three-headed monster now in existence.

A special budget for the pacification operation has been submitted to support the USOM program in Long An. This budget is based upon the reclamation of sixty former strategic hamlets in approximately six months. Based on experience to date the following schedule is about as accurate as possible in forecasting the number of hamlets returned to GVN control through the pacification efforts in the next six months:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF HAMLETS SECURED (CUMULATIVE)</u>
Jan 15-27	4
Jan 28- Feb 23	8
Feb 24- Mar 8	12
Mar 9 -22	16
Mar 23- April 5	20
Apr 6 -19	24
Apr 20-May 3	32 (Effect of 2nd Operation)
May 4 -17	40
May 18- June 1	48
June 2 -15	56
June 16 -29	64