

PROVINCIAL REPORT

Long An Province

May 7, 1964

1. General Narrative on Progress

The increased commitment of men and materials to Long An Province has failed to halt Communist gains. Viet Cong influence is stronger today than any time since 1954. This present situation results from the self-serving politics, inertia and incompetence which Vietnamese officials have permitted to sabotage the Long An pacification effort.

Background

The Provincial Report for November 1963 disclosed the deterioration of the strategic hamlet program. The most significant cause of this deterioration was the neglect of the hamlets by the Provincial Government. A militant and hasty relocation policy was also a contributing factor in the lack of popular support. The refusal to aid hamlets under attack and failure of the technical services to work in the hamlets provided fertile ground for Communist propaganda.

In response to American requests for assistance one battalion of infantry was dispatched to Long An on December 12th. A United States Information Agency survey began in the Province on December 19th to determine the actual extent of Viet Cong political penetration and the attitude of the people living in the hamlets.

Clear and Hold Pacification Plan

A. Military

Two clear and hold plans have been approved for Long An since January 15th. A third plan has been approved and is now awaiting implementation. Three Province Chiefs also have been assigned since the beginning of the operation. The Deputy Chief for Administration has been replaced once and the Deputy for Security twice. Extensive changes have also been made in the District Chiefs.

All three pacification plans are based upon an expansion of GVN (Government of Vietnam) control outward from secure areas. Any of them would prove adequate to drive a solid pro-Government wedge into VC (Viet Cong) controlled areas if they were implemented correctly. Viet Cong influence is so effective and the pro-Government support so weak that adequate military protection is an absolute necessity for the implementation of the economic and information programs.

The initial plan put into effect January 15th required one battalion plus back-up Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps units to pacify each area. This battalion, simultaneously raiding and occupying the hamlets was designed to provide sufficient protection for the pacification of thirty hamlets in ninety days. Two additional operations were planned to begin shortly thereafter, using district capitals adjacent to Highway #4 as the nuclei.

The third, and latest, plan changes both area of operation and emphasis. It reflects the growing concern for the security of Highway #4 (Saigon to My Tho) by designating an area about one kilometer wide on either side of the Highway as an area of GVN strength. Three battalions of infantry deployed in company sized units will be positioned along the Highway from the northern-

most to the southern boundary of the Province. The primary mission is to provide security for the highway and at the same time to protect the hamlets and the cadre working in them. According to the plan seventy-five hamlets (including those already cleared in plans one and two) could be pacified by October 31st. It is possible to anticipate that road security might receive so much emphasis that this operation would revert to simply another static defense, this time on a massive scale.

B. Civilian

All three plans provide for teams of mobile cadre representing the various Provincial services and the former Civic Action Office. These teams are to enter the hamlets immediately behind the troops to perform a variety of functions ranging from interrogation of suspect Viet Cong agents to school construction. The purpose of these cadre is to have Government representatives in the hamlets countering VC propaganda with concrete assistance programs as an indication of GVN support for the people. Information gained from the USIS survey provided valuable data for use by the cadre.

The USOM program is designed to exert maximum effort in the pacification area with high impact programs aimed directly at the hamlets. The results of these programs, if properly publicized, should influence the people so that when combined with the benefits of security created by the military forces they would be willing to assist in defending themselves and the benefits they are receiving.

In accordance with the USOM plan presented to the Ambassador and Secretary McNamara on December 19th the various USOM technical divisions have assigned special representatives to assist in the Long An effort. Education, Health, Public Works, Public Administration, Communications Media and Agriculture have been especially helpful. Working with their Provincial counterparts each USOM technical division developed a draft plan for approval and implementation by the appropriate provincial agency. These plans developed in the Province with the assistance of the Vietnamese personnel in Long An are geared to the pacification effort to achieve maximum psychological impact. These plans have been modified and accepted by the former Province Chief. They can be placed in operation with additional U.S. and Vietnamese funds and personnel. All USOM plans are flexible enough to support a clear and hold operation in any area in the Province. That area must be decided upon and maintained, however.

These plans have not yet been officially presented at the ministerial level. Copies have been informally delivered to the Directorate for New Rural Life. The Vietnamese appear willing to implement these plans, since they appear to be the only coordinated plans developed for civilian agency participation in a pacification effort. Each plan calls for a contribution from both USOM and GVN.

Increase in American Personnel

Increases in both MAAG and USOM personnel to support the pacification effort were requested last December. The USOM Rural Affairs staff has been increased from one to nine with two vacancies to be filled when qualified personnel are found. The MAAG staff at Province level has been increased from 8 to 15; in

addition, three of the critical districts have received advisory teams of two men each. These teams, like USOM personnel, are seriously hampered in the performance of their mission in the districts because of the security problem.

Financial Situation

The USOM Rural Affairs program is administered through the Province Agreement. Two such Agreements have been approved for Long An; one in November 1962 and the second in April 1963. Since the later date no further funds have been provided.

A. Authorized Expenditures

Long An was authorized a total of 19,380,340 VN\$ (US \$258,000.). Authority was granted in the Agreements to spend this money for

Relocation Allowance for 4,727 families	11,574,940. VN\$
Per Diem for Training Hamlet Cadre	1,588,800.
Per Diem for Training Hamlet Militia	874,500.
Per Diem for Training Hamlet Chiefs	302,000.
Self-help Projects for 162 Hamlets	3,240,000.
Miscellaneous Expenditures	1,800,000.

B. Funds Available

Of the authorized amount only 11,235,000VN\$ was actually made available to the province. The remaining eight million was held in Saigon since it had not been obligated by the end of 1963.

On January 15th, the beginning of the clear and hold, a little over four million piasters (US \$60,000.) was available to finance the operation. From a practical standpoint, only the Miscellaneous Fund of about one million piasters was available to support the multitude of special projects which became increasingly necessary to keep the civilian side of the operation going. This fund paid for the construction of hamlet bridges, school rooms, technicians to implement the agricultural programs, announcers and engineer for the new radio station, small gifts (tea, cigarettes) used by the USIS survey team and many other minor, but important items not foreseen last April 1963. At the end of March additional funds were transferred into Miscellaneous.

C. Requirements

Nearly 100% of all programs proposed for the province since January 15th require personnel and materials not previously authorized. The USOM technical divisions do not have access to funds for these programs. The cost of these programs has been borne by the Provincial Agreement as described above. On April 23rd the Committee from the GVN New Rural Life Directorate with some U.S. members from MAAG and USOM visited Long An to write up a new Province Agreement. Under new ground rules established by the Vietnamese, this budget committee had no authority to discuss, or fund, any of the really important programs such as health, education, agriculture, public works, information

or Chieu Hoi. These will supposedly be discussed and written up by another committee. It has not yet been determined whether each ministry will form its own committee to examine and approve funds for its area of interest, or whether each ministry will furnish representatives for a single sub-committee under the New Rural Life Directorate. In the meantime, there is no funds and no authority to implement the programs in Long An.

From the provincial level, it appears that GVN in Saigon desires to exercise a more restrictive, centralized control of funds in the province. More flexibility, not less, is required to get these programs moving. The budget committee even attempted to cancel programs agreed to by the Province Committee (Province Chief, MAAG and USOM) and funded with the last of the money remaining in the old Agreement. These programs, agreed upon by the province committee completely within the provisions and regulations established by the old Agreement are absolutely necessary for continued progress in agriculture, education and construction. It was only with great difficulty that the majority of these programs were not eliminated. This committee, in fact, had no legal authority to nullify the decisions of the Province Committee. However, in practice, when the Province Chief is given an order by GVN he must obey, whether it goes against previously determined joint US/GVN agreements or not.

Two million piasters emergency advance has been secured for Long An through the efforts of USOM Rural Affairs. However, since not only money but authority to spend it is necessary, events indicate that GVN will not approve the expenditure of this two million for any program whose future is to be determined by the ministries as discussed in the preceding paragraphs. Net result: we can train hamlet militia, but not teachers, agricultural extension agents or hamlet medical personnel. This is the reverse order of the program, which attempts to give the people something to fight for before we ask them to fight.

Execution and Progress Report

Since it began on January 15th the Long An pacification effort has not proceeded according to plan. For the past sixty days the military operation has not proceeded at all.

A summary of the military operation appears as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity</u>
January 15th	One battalion occupies the first four hamlets
January 16	Troops ordered not to search houses or impose curfew
January 28	Troops ordered into second four hamlets over objections of MAAG and USOM. Minimum essential tasks in first four not yet completed.
January 30	Change in National Government. Province Chief relieved.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity</u>
February 1	Province Chief reinstated but authority limited to civilian functions only. New Sector Commander appointed by Khanh Government to control Self Defense Corps and Civil Guard. Airborne Brigade Commander appoints his personal representative to command airborne units in clear and hold area. Clear and hold operation is now finished for all practical purposes.
February 23	Troops withdrawn from hamlets.
February 24	New battalion assigned to hamlets.
February 26	Troops withdrawn from hamlets.
March 3	New Province Chief appointed. Regains control of SDC and Civil Guard; has nominal command of clear and hold units at the pleasure of 7th Division and Airborne Brigade.
March 9	Troops returned to hamlets in anticipation of visit by Secretary McNamara.
March 12	Troops withdrawn from hamlets.
March 14	Troops return, occupy four new hamlets without prior planning or notification. (Total now 12 hamlets).
March 15	New battalion assigned to hamlets.
March 17	Troops withdrawn from hamlets.
March 18	New battalion assigned to hamlets, but does not actually occupy them.
March 24	New battalion assigned to hamlets; security of Highway #4 takes priority.
April 2	Troops withdrawn from hamlets. Replaced same day for visit by Mr. Nixon.
April 7	New battalion assigned to hamlets.
April 8	Troops withdrawn from hamlets.
April 11	Troops return to hamlets. Using them as base only to protect Tan An City and Highway #4.
May 3	New Province Chief assigned.
May 6	Third clear and hold plan approved.

Two severe setbacks occurred in April. On April 17th Viet Cong units destroyed the National Police check point in Go Den (one Highway #4) and the SDC Training Center. About 100 SDC casualties resulted, the majority of them newly recruited young men from the clear and hold area. Over 100 U.S. furnished weapons were lost along with quantities of ammunition.

Two weeks later a squad of Viet Cong entered the provincial Chieu Hoi Center on the outskirts of Tan An and carried off the entire group of about 70 Chieu Hoi without firing a shot. No GVN guards were posted. From a military standpoint these actions were serious defeats. From a psychological approach and for the future of the SDC recruiting and Chieu Hoi programs they were major disasters.

Late Developments

On May 3rd a new Province Chief, Lt. Colonel Anh, former commander of the 47th Infantry Regiment in II Corps was appointed in Long An. Col. Anh's past experience in clear and hold operations plus one month in military operations in Long An Province in late 1963 indicate a great improvement over the previous "do-nothing" Province Chief. He apparently has good political connections in Saigon. On the occasion of his assumption of command in Long An, Col. Anh (and the 7th Division Commander) assured MAAG and USOM that they were fully behind the clear and hold principle.

Implementation of USOM Programs

Agriculture

a. Pig-Corn

Four hundred families will receive pigs during the first phase of the clear and hold plan. Two hundred and forty of these families live in hamlets in the clear and hold area established January 15th. One hundred and sixty live in GVN controlled hamlets outside this area.

One hundred and sixty of the four hundred families have been selected by name and interviewed. Fifty-five have completed their new pig stys in accordance with the agreement and will receive their pigs about May 20th.

Eight hundred additional families could receive pigs if funds are provided to pay for supervisory cadre and transportation.

b. Poultry Program

Three hundred roosters are programed for Long An to improved the stock. They will be distributed free to farmers in hamlets in the clear and hold areas.

Two hundred additional chickens per month could be made available if funds are provided for supervisory personnel, feed, coups, medical care and transportation.

c. Improved Rice Seed Program

One hundred and twenty-two tons of improved rice seed will be distributed in Long An by May 31. Twenty-two tons of seed, in twenty kilo bags per farmer, have already been distributed to twenty hamlets. Twelve of these hamlets are in the clear and hold area.

d. Fertilizer Program

All farmers receiving rice seed can receive fertilizer directly from NACO on credit without interest; this will be repaid in kind (rice) or cash at the current market price when the loan falls due two months after the crops are harvested.

e. Insecticide Program

One insect control team has been organized in each clear and hold hamlet. This team will receive free the full amount of DDT, etc. required to protect the crops and as many sprayers as required to dispense it.

f. Rural Mutual Assistance Program

A hamlet discussion and action group is being formed to provide mutual assistance for agricultural problems. Notebooks and study materials will be provided and both provincial agricultural personnel and NACO representatives will explain programs and resources available to the hamlet farmers.

Construction Program

a. Bridges

Four intra-hamlet bridges have been completed in the clear and hold hamlets.

b. Community Building/Medical Station

Two combination community buildings and hamlet medical stations have been completed and a third is under construction. One of these buildings is programmed for every hamlet. About 100 will be needed by the end of 1964.

c. Sanitation

Fifty water seal privies are programmed for construction at schools, aid stations and family homes in the clear and hold area.

Chieu Hoi Center

Construction of a new Chieu Hoi Center and Demonstration Area has been approved and funds obligated. Some construction has begun. The impact on the program by the recent kidnapping of all the Chieu Hoi may render this project uneconomical.

Education

a. School Construction

Classroom construction in Long An was formerly funded by Asia Foundation, so no authority was given in the Province Agreements to build schools.

Three classrooms per school is the objective, and three schools have been approved by the Province Committee for hamlets in the clear and hold area. Requests have been received from the Director of Primary Education for seven additional schools both in and outside the clear and hold area. Final approval for expenditure of funds for schools is based upon certification from province authorities that teachers will be available, land has been set aside and there are sufficient students to justify the request.

b. Adult Education

Five evening classes in reading and writing simple Vietnamese were opened in clear and hold hamlets with USOM funds. Two classes have been temporarily suspended. These classes can serve not only as an advancement of individual education but as excellent propaganda vehicles for the GVN. Since these classes are taught in the evening, security is the chief regulator on number of classes and teachers.

c. School Repair and Assistance

Twenty-five classrooms have been repaired, enlarged or modified with USOM supplied tin and cement; in addition a great quantity of note books and other educational materials have been provided schools in the clear and hold area since January 15th. At least 15,000 more notebooks featuring photographs and a history of Long An Province will be delivered by USIS shortly for distribution in the hamlets.

Health

Plans but no progress.

Information

A Long An radio station has been established since February 14th chiefly through the efforts of USOM Communications Media. Station manager, announcers and engineers are paid through the Province Agreement. This station is designed to appeal to hamlet residents in the province.

Public Administration

Forty-five cadre were trained under the auspices of USOM Public Administration. These men consisted of five village chiefs and twenty men from hamlets in the clear and hold area. They received 15 days special instruction in hamlet administration.

One District Chief attended the special course in Saigon.

Public Works

a. Water Program

One large water tank was installed in a clear and hold hamlet. A U.S. Seabee crew and well drilling rig began the first deep well in Long An (Ben Luc District Headquarters). Water from this well will be piped out to about five nearby hamlets.

This crew and equipment have been on the site for thirty-five days. They have been able to drill only eight days due to lack of casing and tools. One hundred thousand piasters was loaned from the Province Agreement to buy pipe or they would not have been able to reach the present depth of 108 feet. The team commander estimates that this well must go to a depth of 600 feet to reach adequate supplies of water for the project. This could be accomplished in one more month if pipe for drilling is available. At the present rate it will take six months.

USOM personnel have inspected the Tan An City water pumping facility several times with the view towards pumping water out to the hamlets. No inspection report or recommendations have been presented.

Extension Service

An extension service team funded through the province Agreement and staffed by female American IVS and CVN personnel is working in the hamlets in the clear and hold area to improve sanitation, child care nutrition and Four-S type projects. This effort has met with very good success and is receiving full Long An USOM support. A program is now underway to work with the thirty-five female Viet Cong prisoners in the Long An prison in an attempt to rehabilitate them. This team has full access to USOM commodities, food and construction materials. The provincial orphanage is also being assisted by this team.

Public Safety

Province has failed to implement the USOM Public Safety plan for resources control.

Summary

The clear and hold pacification operation has not been successful in Long An Province.

The continuing struggle for power at a higher level has turned the deployment of troops in Long An into a game of musical chairs. Personalities and politics are deemed more important than the effort to win the civil war against the Communists. ARVN forces have not had a substantial victory in the province in many months. Morale is low and uncertainty high. There has been no substantial change in ARVN tactics since the Diem regime. Aggressive, coordinated small unit actions and night patrols remain a thing of the future.

From the non-military viewpoint three significant failures dominate the scene. First, the social injustices and corruption disclosed in the USIS-led survey have not been corrected nor the guilty parties punished. In many talks with the two preceding Province Chiefs the MAAG and USOM advisors explained the implications of these past activities from a psychological standpoint. The people in the hamlets have justifiable, documented complaints which the Viet Cong are enlarging upon and exploiting with energy and enthusiasm. The hamlet residents know that these conditions were disclosed to the provincial government by the survey teams and therefore corrective action must be taken or the new government, by implication, will appear to condone them. The only result: one person who talked too freely to the survey team was punished by the same chief she had complained against.

Second, and most serious, is the failure of the psychological campaign to inform the people. Viet Cong political cadre have infiltrated every hamlet in the province, using their two most effective weapons—terror and propaganda—to gain the support of the people. To counter this activity it was agreed that GVN must make a massive effort to regain the confidence and loyalty of the people by exploiting to the maximum the various civilian assistance programs.

In the four months since the pacification effort began the provincial Information Service has failed to produce any positive act not directly funded, supplied and insisted upon by one of the American agencies. Not a single sign or dedication ceremony has marked the opening of a new school, bridge or community building in the hamlets. Spot checks in the hamlets indicate that the people have no idea why this construction is being done or who is responsible (i.e. GVN). Unfortunately, in those instances where the people did have some thoughts about the matter they declared the "Americans have done this because the Government never did anything for us before except collect taxes and when the Americans came these things were done."

The Viet Cong have made no material things available to the people, but have exploited promises of a better life with almost 100% efficiency. The Government on the other hand has produced many material benefits but has not exploited them with any efficiency. Even in those hamlets occupied by the clear and hold forces the people have not really been convinced of the desirability of supporting the national government.

Finally, the real opportunity to reach the people lay in the hands of the mobile cadre. These teams, composed of representatives of all the province technical services were designed to work side by side with the people in the hamlets to bring effective government support to the lowest and most important level in Vietnam: the Vietnamese farmer.

These teams of cadre totaling almost two hundred men have proven to be ill-informed, ill-motivated, poorly led and unsupervised. No coordination exists between the military and civilian forces in the hamlet; in many cases the civilian cadre were sent to hamlets from which the military security force had been withdrawn. In other cases the military unit provided security in hamlets to which no cadres were sent. Work in the hamlets begins at 9am, stops from 12:00 to 2:00pm for lunch and then is halted for the day at 3:30pm to enable the cadre to arrive home long before darkness. No cadres, of course, are sleeping in the hamlets.

Conclusion

The situation in Long An is grave, but not hopeless. To the Americans working in the province the errors in the pacification effort and the steps necessary to correct them seem readily apparent. Vietnam is a sovereign nation. These necessary steps can only be suggested, not imposed. Unless the Vietnamese determine to win the war and do it soon, the present situation will continue to deteriorate at an ever-increasing rate, American advice and assistance notwithstanding.