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MINUTES OF MEETING

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR RURAL AFFAIRS

March 28, 1964

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A meeting was held in the USOM Conference Room on March 28, 1964, called and chaired by Mr. Ogden Williams, Assistant Director for Rural Affairs, and attended by the following:

Mr. Bert Fraleigh,	Deputy Assistant Director for Rural Affairs
Mr. Leonard Maynard,	Chief of Operations, Rural Affairs
Mr. Frank Culley	USOM Regional Representative, I Corps
Mr. Robert Burns	USOM Regional Representative, II Corps
Mr. Vaughn Stapleton	USOM Regional Representative, III (a) Corps
Mr. E. Jay Ruoff	USOM Regional Representative, III (b) Corps
Mr. Ralph Boynton	Rural Affairs Executive Officer
Mr. Vincent Puritano	Rural Affairs Program Officer
Mr. John Towle	Rural Affairs Assistant Program Officer
Mr. John Hutel	Rural Affairs Reports Officer
Mr. Daniel McMerney	Rural Affairs Logistics Officer
Mr. Richard Evans	Rural Affairs Self-Help Advisor

Messrs. Joseph Brent and Alfred Hurt attended the greater part of the meeting; Messrs. William Trigg, Sol Silver, and John M. Dunn attended the latter part of the meeting.

The meeting opened with a discussion on the desirability of obtaining additional Seabee teams. A strong recommendation was made to move a team to Quang Tri. These teams are on a 6-month contract basis after which they are replaced by another team. Mr. Evans mentioned that they have done a fine job of well-drilling and suggested that they continue to do this and then to stay on to maintain the wells which is equally important.

Mr. Williams announced another break-through of PAA's (Procurement Authorization Application). There is now a marriage between the office of Colonel Lac (GVN Permanent Bureau for Pacification) and the Office of the Vice Premier for Pacification embodied by Mr. Tran Long of the Vice Premier's office with whom we now work and seem to get good coordination and cooperation. We hand the PAA's to him and he, in turn, coordinates them with the concerned Ministries.

Mr. McMerney cautioned us of the fact that by the end of April, we will no longer have a cargo plane which we borrowed from the Embassy.

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The subject of the release of funds was brought up and Mr. Williams stated that a Rural Affairs Memorandum (#72-64, dated March 25, 1964) has gone out to all Provincial and Regional Representatives giving the text, both in English and Vietnamese, of the telegram sent by the Director General of Budget and Foreign Aid, GVN, to all Province Chiefs, instructing them to release all unused CY 1963 funds. If there is still some question about this, to let him know and he will see to it that another communication is issued.

Further on the PAA's, Mr. Williams stated that the operation support budget item has been two-thirds approved and the money for the CPA has been assured, also for the upcountry movement. Colonel Lac will sign the document by the end of next week. Colonel Lac plans to visit the eight critical provinces to get the plans approved almost immediately. We anticipate problems on hamlet cadre which are still unresolved. Colonel Lac will send money to those provinces that need money first. Mr. Williams then suggested that Mr. Puritano prepare a list of priorities; after the most critical provinces have been taken care of, we can then take care of the rest.

A discussion of the forthcoming trip to Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan and Binh Tuy tomorrow to be made by Messrs. Dunn and Nes followed.

Mr. Williams said that there are some questions of the relationship with CAS. He felt that we should give them as much help as we can. "Idea is that you tell your provincial men to grant any reasonable request, but tell them to stay in their own corral."

Mr. Williams requested that all Regional Representatives prepare a list of their immediate personnel needs, US, Local, Third-Country nationals, etc. A discussion on the advisability of using third-country nationals in lieu of local Vietnamese followed. Mr. Fraleigh explained the Chinese barter arrangement--saying that perhaps 20 or more may end up working for Rural Affairs, the question is now where they should work and that we should decide where we could best use them. During the time necessary for Washington to hire the 40-odd assistant provincial representatives, these third-country nationals might fill in, as well as IVS personnel. Many were of the opinion that it would be better still to hire local Vietnamese in the provinces. It seems, however, that there are certain personnel rulings that prevent us from doing this legally. Ralph Boynton mentioned that the Embassy is running an ad in the newspapers which should help us find some local (Saigonese) people. Mr. Williams wanted to know about hiring in the provinces, since this would be more desirable and advantageous than having Saigonese used as provincial assistants. Mr. Boynton

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said that we are only supposed to hire them for temporary periods of time. Mr. Stapleton said that he does hire local people, and since there is no other legal way to do it, he cheats. It is working out fine. Mr. Williams said that he will see to it that we can hire local people for assistants in the provinces for longer periods of time, but wondered about their clearances. Bob Burns interjected with the remark that the province inhabitants, themselves, clear these men. Mr. Ruoff stated that Mr. Bumgardner (USIS) is very pessimistic about his program which is about to end and that he has a lot of good local people that we may want to look at. Mr. Williams will find out more details about this from Mr. Zorthian.

Mr. Maynard then gave a brief talk on Mobile Cadre. The original intent of the Mobile or Construction Cadre was to work with the people in the hamlet, to assist them in the construction of the physical defenses and to organize and to prepare the people to repel VC attacks. Later, when we knew more about them, we began to use them in different ways. We began to pay these people more money. When the GVN realized what was happening, the whole matter became very sticky. The case which alerted the GVN was the use of cadres in Ba Xuyen for the Vinh Loi oil stain project. These cadre were used as extension agents and paid 40 to 60 piastres per diem. The GVN never approved this and never formally authorized payment of per diem.

The GVN has now come up with its notion of the kind of cadre needed to accomplish its ends. There will be mobile cadre, but their function will be restricted to the original intent of the use of cadre--construction phase work. When the phase is completed, their job is done. But the GVN has also come up with a proposal for political and administrative cadre as part of the Pacification Plan. The idea is that in a village, there will be 50 of these political and economic cadre; about 12 of these people will be part of the village and hamlet administration. The village administration consists of about 6 men: the village chief; deputy chief, treasurer, chief of the SDG, Security Officer, Youth. In addition, there will be five hamlet chiefs and 38 other people. They will all come from the hamlet. They will receive 15 days training with heavy political content. In addition, as required, the 38 people, the political action cadre can be pulled in to receive specific training (Self-Help, etc.). The training would be of short duration. Then they go back to their hamlets and teach others in their hamlets. There is a controversy whether or not these people should be paid. These will be selected people who are now ready to come out to work for the GVN and against the VC. If this program is successful, they would replace the VC infrastructure.

Mr. Culley of I Corps gave his briefing.

He sounded very positive; the political cadre is very active, they had an excellent rice harvest, an increase of 25 to 40%--the farmers, themselves, are cognizant of this. Another notable factor--vast increase in road maintenance--one can now move from Quang Tri all the way to Quang Tin. Six new

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bridges are being built in Quang Nam and Quang Tri; all of them are heavily guarded by the SDC. Market places are crowded and stores are well stocked; new markets are springing up. Traffic is confined chiefly to Route I. During the past few days, Quang Tin and Quang Nam saw an influx of about 2,000 refugees, and the ARVN, for the first time, showed real Civic Action, moving blankets and other necessary items into the refugee camps. Then they started to look for places where they could be resettled rather than putting them into temporary places. The Corps Commander, Brigadier General Ton That Xung, does the pushing. Political activity is on the increase, particularly in Quang Tin and Quang Nam. On the other side of the picture is the lack of funds which has seriously impaired our program. VC propaganda effort is on the increase with anti-American slogans and programs. There is also an increase of VC activity in Quang Tin. Dan Whitfield, Provincial Representative in Quang Tin, mentioned the other day that there were 21 incidents, whereas MAC/V reported 44 incidents, including capture and kidnapping of district and province chief. There are plans of the oil-spot expansion concept but these plans have not yet been implemented. The population of Quang Tin is very anti-VC.

Bert Fraleigh mentioned that Dan Whitfield also briefed him and is very hopeful about progress in his province. The Province Chief in Quang Tin makes his civil servants go into the hamlets to work with the people. The Province Chief is dynamic, a civilian, and is pushing. He has a history of being a good administrator.

Mr. Burns of II Corps gave his briefing.

"The title of my talk this morning is 'let's not kid ourselves.' There is no such thing in this country as a national program. There is no such thing as a Pacification Plan. There is no such thing as a Second Corps. Every province chief carries out a pacification program as he believes it should be carried out. Civic Action is non-existent. The attitude of the military towards Civic Action is such that when they are not talking or fighting or resting, they should assist the population in civic action projects. I have recently had a discussion with General Tri and during this discussion, the principal subject was Civic Action. The Civic Action program as carried out in II Corps amounts to a reporting procedure for the Vietnamese and has already become a reporting item for MAAG and ourselves. Too often the role of USOM is misunderstood as supply agents for Civic Action programs to be carried out in a haphazard manner by military personnel making a one-day visit to selected hamlets. Our role, the USOM role, is not a reporting role, nor a supply role nor an advisory role. Our role is to supplement and augment the civil and military function within each hamlet of Vietnam. It is only in this way that the war can be won. This is not now taking place.

"I have proposed to General Tri recommendations which will provide closer cooperation between US agencies and the Vietnamese Army by using

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ARVN, SDC, CG, and hamlet militia in demonstrating to the people at the hamlet level that this is their government and their war and that only they can win it.

"The US military exert a forceful role as military assistant advisors in setting leadership examples on these units to which they are attached, particularly separate units such as the rangers, the marines, the para-military, the Special Forces. So often the attitude and actions of the US military assistance advisors are reflected in the actions of our VN friends. One example I might give of how the Vietnamese think of their own conduct in the villages can be illustrated thusly. I overheard 3 VN rangers talking in a restaurant asking themselves what their role is in the hamlets. The consensus was that their actions there conformed to the description applied to them by the VC. This awareness on the part of the rangers, whose conduct has not always been laudatory or commendable, points up the fact that the VN soldiers are ready for an intensive Civic Action village helper orientation.

"I have three recommendations that I believe might be useful for your consideration. (1) Media Support. For 150,000 Montagnard people who speak languages other than Vietnamese and are on the fence: radio programming, movies, written material in their own languages. (2) Action Agency that will respond rapidly to requests from the field--a military support system. (3) An Operative Clause in our Provincial Agreements: you can use any amount of money for anything that can win this war."

Mr. Williams stated that as long as we have vouchered funds, we can't do that.

Mr. Burns ended by saying that he would like to paraphrase a remark of one of our national leaders: "I do not believe that USOM should carry out programs in areas which are inaccessible. I do not mean the avoidance of danger for I would much rather die than live as if I were afraid of dying."

Mr. Vaughn Stapleton of III Corps (A) gave his briefing.

"I think I have had the safest area in Vietnam. I drive into all the areas but I learned that the idea of pacification is in utter confusion. The Pacification effort should be civilian, not military. People have no respect for the military, they don't trust them. Now the question is, where can we get civilians that are qualified to carry out this plan? It should be composed of civilian teams. What is needed in some of these provinces

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is not pacification but economic development."

Mr. Williams thought that the military was in fact in charge in Vietnam, and could do the job if they would change their behavior and tactics.

Mr. Stapleton continued to say that the Pig-Corn Program is a tremendous success, great interest is in Sericulture, the Poultry Program and the School Program. But the medical teams are very weak. A paper mill will be established, which will employ 800 Vietnamese. Mr. Stapleton requested that anytime any USOM people go to the provinces, they should notify the province representative or the regional representative that they will be there.

Mr. Fraleigh stated that the provincial economic plans are ready to be completed but we are waiting for GVN's approval and the cash.

Mr. Evans, speaking about industrial development, thought that the GVN has taken the initiative away again because of red tape. There was a discussion on the various interested Western-type businessmen that come to Vietnam to look for industries into which they can invest. Most of the time, however, the second man is a Chinese who is still, traditionally not accepted by the Vietnamese, which is often the reason for the long delays, etc.

Mr. Stapleton ended his briefing by stating that he had never seen such a dedicated group of people anywhere since he has been in Vietnam, which has been for some time--with IVS. Mr. Williams thought this stems from the fact that we have a very good mission, we are the doers and see the results almost immediately. It is also our job to get others as interested in this effort as we are.

Mr. E. Jay Rueff of III Corps (B) gave his briefing:

"There are three different geographical areas in the lower half of III Corps, all with peculiar problems. These are (1) Tay Ninh - Hau Nghia area, (2) Area adjacent to Saigon, and (3) Upper Delta. These have to be treated in three different ways. Tay Ninh and Hau Nghia show improvement. Tay Ninh now has Cao Dai General Tat as Province Chief. He is in there pushing and he has already accomplished several things: He has been able to recruit 200 men in SDC/CG, although it was impossible to recruit anyone in Tay Ninh for some time. He has improved provincial reaction time to VC activities. He has asked for complete control of his military forces in Tay Ninh. Hau Nghia has not gone anywhere to date. The Gia Dinh/Bien Hoa situation is tied into Saigon. Nguyen Thai from General Mau's office,

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is very much interested in urban development. Military Civic Action has not gone anywhere. Gia Dinh and Bien Hoa need some solid urban planning tied into Saigon city."

(A discussion followed about the advantages of taking care of the ARVN families. Before the ARVN soldier can be motivated to really carry out Civic Action programs, he should have the basics for his own family.)

"In the Upper Delta, several clear-and-holds were progressing. In Dinh Tuong, the clear-and-hold operation did quite well until the Province Chief was killed. He is being buried today. The VC appear to be after good province and district chiefs. In Long An, the Province Chief has not gotten hold of the situation."

Mr. Brent wanted to know if they are operating according to a Provincial Plan or if the operation is going in all different directions. Mr. Ruoff thought that they were not coordinated. "We must encourage them to make and stick to both long and short range plans. General Phat (III Corps) is a very busy man, I have only seen him once. I talked with Colonel Wilbur Wilson (MAAG Advisor III Corps) about 5 times--he is a very dedicated man, but is rather stubborn. Kien Hoa continues to deteriorate even though Colonel Chou has returned. The Pacification Plans may be overly complex, but in the long run they will be effective if adhered to."

Mr. Williams was very interested in a determination of the relationship of sector on one hand and corps on the other hand and also the progress of decentralization.

Mr. Ruoff then gave a short discussion on Voluntary Youth groups. These Youth groups are interested in going into rural areas to work directly with the people but wish to remain independent of the GVN. Ruoff has been promised 50 volunteers to work with USOM Province Representatives.

A general discussion followed in which the question was raised by Mike Dunn just how close are we tied in with the military advisors. Mr. Williams said that everyone knows that this war is primarily a political and psychological war. "These people come here for a year and it is hard for them to absorb quickly what this war is all about. They know exactly how to shoot a rifle in a certain way, but this is not making the necessary impact on the civilian population."

Bob Burns spoke briefly about the recent Kontum incident (using explosives to blow up a MAAG compound) which, he said, resulted in just exactly what the VC wanted: all compounds are now behind barbed wire, curfews are established, etc. Mr. Williams stated that we now have Colonel Valeriano and that he has

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already given us one report. He believed we should arrange a little session with him for General Stilwell and other interested military men to which Mike Dunn concurred.

Mr. Fraleigh ended the meeting with a talk on the various programs now in full swing in the country, or being planned, i. e., the pig program, fertilizer program, rice seed program, 1964 Title II Food Program, pesticides program, and the positive impact these programs have on the rural population.