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Mr. Charles Mann, Director, USOM

September 23, 1965

Rufus Phillips

USOM Support of Rural Construction (Pacification)

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1. You expressed interest in my first-hand observations of USOM operations in the field. Some of these observations and how they relate to the overall USOM counter-insurgency operations have been communicated verbally but I thought it might be helpful if I left them in writing with you. This memo has not been cleared with the AD/PO, although some of the observations have been discussed.

2. From what I have seen in the provinces so far, USOM operations are not at present sufficiently effective to make any significant contribution to winning the war here. The problem is organizational, procedural and conceptual in nature.

3. Currently, the USOM chain of command and operational support from Saigon to the provinces is broken at Corps level by the Regional Directors. The Regional Directors have operational control over the Provincial Representatives in their regions without being able to give the Provincial Representatives effective operational guidance and support. At the regional level they have no GVN counterpart. (The First Corps Commander, who has seized control of the provincial budgets and USOM provincial operations is an exception. However, this is an extremely dangerous and counter-productive political trend towards internal disintegration in Viet-Nam, which the U.S. must share some of the blame by concentrating our resources and personnel at that level).

4. On the GVN side the Corps commanders have no resources except military to bring to bear in support of provincial pacification. They are becoming more and more of a bottleneck in the flow of policy and money (the lifeblood of pacification) from Saigon to the provinces. USOM's establishment of Regional Directors has encouraged the growth of this bottleneck, while rendering the USOM provincial representative ineffectual by cutting him off from direct contact with his main source of policy and money.

5. The USOM Regional Director (who would be more properly named Regional Coordinator because the word Director implies the existence of a Mission or Sub-Mission) has a useful technical, material, and general supervisory support role to fulfill but on substantive matters of pacification concept and policy as well as on the vital flow of authority, funds and often material from

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Saigon to the provinces he can assist only marginally by trying to remove secondary obstructions and resolve misunderstandings at GVN Corps and Division level. Even if he understood counter-insurgency (which unfortunately your current crop of Regional Directors do not) his useful role would be limited by the lack of a counterpart level of Vietnamese government.

6. For these reasons your provincial representatives must take their conceptual guidance and obtain their counter-insurgency operational support from Saigon. Otherwise they will remain what they have largely become, simple purveyors of means in a political/psychological war.

7. At the Saigon level, the USOM needs a focal point for counter-insurgency. This focal point directs counter-insurgency operations in the field while representing the Mission at the operating level of U.S. Interagency operational coordination. This cannot be the Director or the Deputy Director because neither have the time. This is a fulltime job and rightfully belongs to the Assistant Director for Provincial Operations. If he is to function effectively with the GVN and other agencies he must be your counter-insurgency field commander as well as staff advisor. Under Killen he was relegated to the position of staff advisor. If he is not reconstituted as a field commander and as such is the counter-insurgency voice of USOM, then USOM will find itself relegated to a very secondary role in counter-insurgency because in the inevitable push to get things done, responsibility will be assigned to those who can produce.

8. From a procedural and conceptual point of view, USOM has already been relegated to a back-seat in counter-insurgency.

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9. In light of the above, I would like to personally recommend the following:



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a. Restore the authority and responsibility for USOM counter-insurgency operations to the Assistant Director for Provincial Operations.

b. Make this effective by giving him sole authority for assigning provincial representatives, based on proven capability rather than rank or grade. Even more important, assign him the responsibility for writing the efficiency reports of the Regional Directors, with yourself as reviewing officer.

c. Give the Regional Directors a clear concept of their responsibilities stressing their general supervisory and support role (they aid and guide more than direct), and putting their responsibilities into a proper perspective which takes into account the GVN and which assists rather than hampers the proper functioning of the GVN. (In this connection the title of Regional Coordinator would seem more appropriate to such responsibilities.)

d. Insist on the restoration of the Joint Provincial Coordinating Committee as it existed previously and re-establish workable funding procedures in which the USOM provincial representatives participate in a constructive way. The use of purchased piasters to re-establish the former miscellaneous fund in all provinces and also across-the-board operations in selected "experimental" provinces should be considered. The aim is flexibility and quick reaction. Normally the source of the funds would not be important but it is important in this case as a psychological inducement to the GVN to permit sufficient flexibility and freedom of action particularly in any experimental provinces.

f. Reindoctrinate all of the Regional Directors and many of the Provincial Representatives who have not been exposed to the "counter-insurgency spirit". The current seminars organized by Sam Wilson for the provincial representatives are excellent and should be stepped up as soon as counter-insurgency organization and procedures are decided upon.

9. Make the Assistant Director for Provincial Operations the chief coordinator within USOM for Technical Division support and give him full authority to speak for USOM to the GVN and to other U.S. agencies on counter-insurgency matters and operations within overall policies approved by you. Or create a JCRR mechanism, answerable to the GVN Central Committee on Rural Construction, which carries out the economic and social development portion of counter-insurgency. (My personal opinion is that the Technical Divisions along with their Ministerial counterparts will always be incapable of doing the job out in the provinces and that the JCRR approach is much preferable. However, it will have to be carefully

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worked out with the GVN.)

10. If the Assistant Director for Provincial Operations is put back into business as your field commander, I believe that the essential qualities of vitality and dynamism can be restored to USOM's operations in the provinces. You have good people, what they need are the mission and the means.

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