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TO: SLO Staff

FROM: Ed Lansdale 

SUBJECT: SLO Task Outline

**REFERENCES:**

SLO Staff Memo, "Our Major Task," May 26, 1966  
Lansdale Memo to Ambassador Lodge, "The SLO Role,"  
May 27, 1966  
Lodge Memo to Lansdale, May 31, 1966

**OBJECTIVE**

Our final objective in Vietnam is to help the Vietnamese people gain their own political institutions (parties, groups, fronts) with which to match the Communist political organizations, as a vital element in gaining a political base for making the Vietnamese a free people. We will do so by our providing constructive influence on Vietnamese leaders to establish political parties with direct support and participation by the people, and by our encouraging the forming of coalitions so that these will grow to serve the national needs beyond sectional or sectarian limits. Initial organizations are to be readied by the 11 September 1966 elections.

**DEVELOPMENT**

1. We need to identify all potentially meaningful parties and groups, and to have facts about them for guiding our work.

- a. Key leaders
- b. Platform/stated goals
- c. Membership: type, numbers, and location in Vietnam.

2. We must establish friendly contact with the leaders, in a manner inducing confident expressions of goals and problems, as well as keeping U.S. liaison lines clear.

3. We must determine the true feasibility for coalition of parties or groups having compatible objectives. This includes probes on the compatibility of personalities among leaders.

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4. Wherever feasible, we must then encourage leaders of compatible parties and groups to join together for the common good; encouragement will include our hosting a meeting, in the role of supplying the "good offices" of a third party, when necessary.

5. Periodically, we must estimate the percentage of the electorate represented by the groups with whom we have contact, to measure their significance in the national political confrontation with the Communists, and to indicate where our further efforts are required.

6. In our advice and encouragement of Vietnamese political institutions, we must adhere to teaching principles of our own belief in democracy: the importance of the individual citizen as expressed in our Declaration of Independence, the fundamental safeguards in our Bill of Rights, the true "sanctity of the ballot box" through a free electoral process, the "checks and balances" of governmental organization, the merits of "rule of law" with like justice for all citizens, and the concept of governing with the consent of those governed; only by upholding our own principles can we hope to win a confrontation with Communist beliefs.

We must stay away from teaching techniques of so-called "practical politics" such as rigging elections, electorate control, and mass manipulation.

7. As a means of strengthening the adoption of these principles, we must be alert to encourage any citizen's group or movement desiring to make these principles viable in Vietnam; for example, this would mean encouraging student and other youth groups, or the Revolutionary Development Corps of Cadre, in helping the electorate hold a "free" (honest and orderly) election.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. The work entails not only contact with Vietnamese leadership, to encourage and guide Vietnamese towards the objective, but also includes keeping contact lines free within the U.S. Mission, keeping the Ambassador and U.S. Government adequately informed of developments, and having our own continuing evaluation of the situation to guide our work. SLO must work as a true team to accomplish this.

2. Inevitably, certain critical phases of our work with Vietnamese leaders will have to be handled by me personally. This does not mean, however, that it is to be a one-man show. On the contrary, there is a great deal of meaningful work for each one of us to do. While initial tasks will be assigned to members of the Team each will have to make use of his own judgement and initiative to maintain his momentum, never forgetting of course the continuing requirement for coordination with me and other Team members to ensure that our activities are mutually supporting and properly timed.

3. Sam Karrick, as SLO Executive Officer, will journal assignments and be informed of progress within SLO. He will maintain adequate liaison with the Embassy Political Section, to ensure keeping contact lines free.

4. Joe Redick will serve as Reports Officer for this SLO endeavor. As such, he will assure that adequate written reporting is forwarded by SLO to U.S. officials who "need to know," as well as tabulate and assess progress being made, for SLO guidance.

5. Initial assignments of team members for contacts will be made as determined in SLO work sessions, on the basis of selecting the person having the best existing relationship for such contacts, so that initiation of the work can be done in the most normal, friendliest manner possible. Later, contacts can be passed within SLO for continued follow-up. The first work sessions will determine contacts with such major groups as Catholics, Buddhists, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Dai Viets, VNQDD, and Labor. Later, we must probe the political intentions of other groups such as Veterans, Youth, Southern Associations, and some that have gone partially underground (Can Lao, for example).

6. The initial work session will be early in the week of 5 June. Please come prepared to recommend how you can make your best contribution.

7. Each member of SLO should refresh himself on the principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. (Texts are in the almanac at the office. An excellent discussion of the Declaration is in "Image of America", copy available from Sam Karrick).

SLO:EGLansdale:pag  
June 4, 1966