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TO: General Lansdale
FROM: Rufus C. Phillips
SUBJECT: Trip to Vinh Long Province

1. I drove with John Vann and several other passengers from Saigon to Vinh Long on 23 August. Our original intention was to go to Go Cong but security conditions did not permit this. On the way down, I noticed two changes in the last year -- more double cropping of rice and many more outboard engines on sampans.

2. At []

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[] is an old friend who commanded a psywar platoon in 1954 during the reoccupation of Camau. [] and before that was a District Chief in the Province.

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3. According to [] security in the Province has steadily increased since 1964. Most of the Province is pretty well pacified except for the area adjacent to Vinh Binh Province and Duc Ton District. [] said that the RD program had proceeded as far as it could go because of the lack of troops. He was now concentrating on consolidation. He said that the Province had the capacity to recruit additional RF and PF and that agreement in principle for an additional nine RF companies and 3,000 PF had been reached with General Quang and the Ministry of Defense in December 1965. However, the actual go-ahead had not been granted. His opinion was that this was because of a lack of cooperation and coordination between General Quang and the Ministry of Defense. [] felt strongly that the RF and PF should be moved over under State the Ministry of Revolutionary Development to make coordinated security support of pacification possible; and to stop the padding of payrolls by Corps. [] said he had taken this problem up with General Thang when he had recently visited Vinh Long.

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4. We visited Ten Phu Trung Village in the Sadec District (80% Hoa Hao) of the Province about 15 kilometers from Sadec City. Along the way I noticed more than ten self-help concrete bridges and five self-help elementary schools constructed in 1965 and 1966 which was impressive evidence of physical progress. We met a young village Police Chief, a Hoa Hao,

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who had been elected by the people of the village, and who was concurrently the commander of about 100 PF. Physical security in the village was good except for the hamlet at the end of the canal closest to Duc Ton District. Two Hoa Hao notables had been kidnapped from the village on 7 August by the VC.

5. The Hoa Hao in Sadec are apparently divided among several factions as elsewhere. However, the Hoa Hao Police Chief when asked about this said he himself was not a partisan of any group but strongly believed all the Hoa Hao should work together to defend the country. One serious problem is the pay of the Village Chief which is currently about 1900 piasters in contrast to the PF Commander and the RD Cadre (over 3,000 piasters) whom the Village Chief is supposed to command and direct. (Note: I understand that General Thang has recommended an increase in the pay of Village Chiefs several times.)

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6. Comment: ~~Vinh Long~~ Province looks pretty good. Both the ~~Province~~ Chief, who was Deputy Province Chief in 1962-1963 and [] know it well and understand pacification. It seems to me that the U.S. should push hard for authorization to the Province for the necessary additional RF and PF to establish sufficient security in Duc Ton District and along the Vinh Binh border so that Revolutionary Development can be started in these areas. In the meantime, the Province plans to consolidate existing hamlets and appears ready for more intensive development along the lines of the An Giang project. We must avoid pushing the GVN to take on additional hamlets until the necessary RF and PF security forces are available.

SLO:RCPhillips:rm
August 24, 1966

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