

Rufus C. Phillips III

June 8, 2006

Lt. Gen. (ret) Sam Wilson

Dear Sam,

I am finishing the final part of my book which covers the 1965-1968 period beginning when I came out with Lansdale in Sept. 65 initially for about three weeks to help them get started. I stayed initially in a hotel but then you offered me your place as you were going on leave. You were head of Provincial Ops at the time and then became Mission Coordinator for Lodge, I think that occurred about the same time Porter was appointed Pacification Coordinator.

I have some questions about that period which I would like to talk to you about over the phone as I am trying to get an initial draft off to a prospective publisher in about two weeks and won't be able to get down to have a longer chat with you until later in the summer. I thought maybe after you read what I am transmitting we could discuss it over the phone.

First there is a memo (enclosed) I wrote for Charlie Mann as his request before I left. I'm sure you must have gotten a copy of it. Do you recall whatever happened if anything as a result of it? I have a note in a letter I wrote to Ed later in the fall of '65 about Roy Wehrle coming to Washington to discuss some of my recommendations. Does this tickle your memory at all? I have later correspondence which indicated that Mann turned out to be a real disappointment, too much of a bureaucrat and I remember being disappointed at the time by his reaction when I briefed him verbally on what was in the memo.

Secondly Lodge and his failure to give better backing to Lansdale has always been something of a mystery to me although based on my previous exposure to Lodge during the waning days of the Diem regime and then from some of the cables he sent to Washington he sent after the General Khanh coup I never had a good impression of his understanding of pacification or the Vietnamese. You worked for him directly so some impressions from you would be helpful. I enclose two pages from a book by Zalin Grant based mainly on an interview with Barry Zorthian about what he and Habib thought of Lansdale. How accurate are Zorthian's impressions of the attitude of others including Lodge. It seem clear to me that Ed and Lodge were not reading from the same page. Then there is the Karnow story which I also enclose. From what I knew of Lodge and his expressed desire to be "leaker in chief" I think he is probably the source of the last comment in the article. Of course, Lodge was under a lot of pressure from LBJ to get instant pacification results which I suppose was one of the main reasons for the Porter appointment. But why pile on Lansdale?

Also you knew Porter pretty well; it seems as though he was a pretty decent guy although I got word back that someone had suggested I might come out to become his deputy and he reportedly said, "He's too close to the Vietnamese." Ellsberg thought that both Habib and Porter actively disliked the Vietnamese. Did you encounter any of that?

Lansdale was pretty optimistic in his letters to me up to the end of 1965. Thought he was making progress. Did something specific happen to trigger Lodge's dissatisfaction, or was it a case of pressure from Washington plus increased bureaucratic sniping in Saigon? Of course, Lansdale whole informal modus operandi didn't fit any bureaucratic pattern.

Would appreciate your views. Will call you next week.

As ever,

Talk w/ See
6.18.00
06/15/06

1. Lodge - consume politics.
Habit - ~~not~~ prod
2. Wished immediate vent, dramatic results - prod 8
version control
3. Sly scheming - either
Govt int - U.S. & Passes -
stated,
4. Miseric. Conducts - ~~not~~ prod
Miseric. council mtgs.
Sam Rep. in writing
Drew up - 10 - 12
pages - Ed recalled
at ~~coffee~~ ~~part~~ -
EGL read ~~book~~ - Habit
g.f. looks to ~~book~~
order some art to
show in writing.
5. Summer '67 - Jacobson -
Nov. - 06
6. Bill Porter - good
person - esteemed Ed
Kept regard for Ed -
7. Sam - Warriner -

Memo for the Record

Subject: Talk with Sam Wilson on 06.15.06

1. Conversation was in response to my letter to Sam of 06.08.06.
2. Sam never saw my Memo to Charlie Mann about restructuring Provincial Ops. About Lodge, Sam said "he was a consummate politician. He wanted immediate, dramatic results from pacification which he could display in front of Johnson. He tended to favor resources and population control as the right approach.
3. He characterized Habib as a sly, scheming, effective bureaucrat skilled at what he did. Openly pressured the Vietnamese. Sam agreed with description of Habib from Zalin Grant's book quoting Zorthian.
4. Example of how Habib operated. Ed was no longer considered a member of the Mission Council after the appointment of Porter so he no longer attended Mission Council Meetings Sam, as Mission Coordinator, wrote up the minutes and would show them informally in draft to Lansdale so he could be kept informed. Eventually, Habib got wind of Ed reading the minutes and got Lodge to order Sam to stop showing them to Ed.
5. Bill Porter good person, esteemed Lansdale. Didn't like Habib but kept their relations civil. Tried to help Ed indirectly.
6. Sam was at the Warrenton Conference and pleaded for a decentralized approach to pacification at the provincial level. Had impression nobody was listening. Real struggle was over who was going to control pacification overall: State/AID or Defense/MACV. Went to Long An in ____ 1966 with Lodge blessing and reluctant backing of Westmoreland and an independent budget to implement a combined military civil approach which was a kind of prototype for how CORDS eventually operated.