

Mr. Howard W. Hoyt

29 November 1956

Richard Rogers

Field Trip to My Tho Province to Interview Security Forces.

INTERVIEWED MAJOR LE VAN THE, Military Commander in My Tho Province for Operation Thoi Ngoc Han.

Function: Security of Province.

He has direct charge of the Civil Guard. He states he is on the same level as the Province Chief. The Province is divided into five (5) districts, with a military man in charge of security in each district. The military man is on the same level as the District Chief. Districts are divided into posts; many of which are commanded by Civil Guard. He states he works very closely with the Province Chief and any problems they cannot settle are taken through channels to the President. He indicated he was not having any difficulty with the Province Chief. The military operation has been in progress about 10 months. He does not know how long it will continue.

INTERVIEWED MR. NGUYEN VAN THANH, Province Chief of My Tho.

He was formerly Province Chief at Nha Trang and was transferred to My Tho only six (6) weeks ago. He states he is responsible for security in the Province. Discussed the various security forces with him.

Peoples' Defense Corps:

Strength: - one (1) for each 100 people.
2,130 total for Province.

Recruitment: - Local basis for officers.
Commanders assigned from Saigon.

Pay: - 300 piastres from American Aid (Defense Department).
600 piastres from local or province funds.

Training: - Military training by Civil Guard.
Political training under direction of Province Chief.
Amount not certain.

Weapons: - One (1) rifle for each four (4) men.
Received 500 rifles from Saigon.
Little or no ammunition.

Responsibility: - Security of administrative officers.
General security of villages.
Crimes reported to Surete or Gendarmerie for investigation.

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Organization: - All commanding officers appointed by Saigon Headquarters. Province Commander on same level as Province Chief.

Communal Police:

Strength: - 100 in province.

Pay: - 1200 piastres per month from National Budget.
Did not discuss this branch thoroughly, due to lack of time.

Surate: - 51 men at present. Has requested additional men, but it has not been approved by Surate Headquarters.

Pay: - 2500 piastres per month from National Budget.

Organization: - Technical supervision from Saigon Headquarters. Administrative control by Province Chief. He directs activities in the province. He has authority to release persons in custody, or order them to be brought to trial. He can request the removal of any officer including the province commander. If no action is taken by Saigon Headquarters, he can take the matter to the President.

Functions: - Investigate political and civil crimes. Persons arrested are tried in civil courts.

BOA AN DOAN (Civil Guard)

Strength: - 1400 at the present time. Authorized by General Gai a strength of 2900. January 1, 1956, the strength was 2300. The reason for the reduction, some units have been moved out of this province. In order to increase the strength, the Province Chief must make a request to the Civil Guard Headquarters in Saigon. If the request is approved, men can either be assigned by the Saigon Headquarters from some other region, or permission given to the Province Chief to recruit officers in the province. The Province Chief states he has no trouble in finding applicants.

Pay: - 1200 piastres per month for enlisted men with no allowances for family or hospital. The Province Chief stated they were paid from Saigon.

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Organization: - Under normal times, the Provincial Commander of the Civil Guard is responsible to the Province Chief for administrative matters and responsible to Saigon for technical supervision. It is not clear to the writer the exact difference between these two terms. The Province Chief indicated he could move Civil Guard around the province or from station to station - that he could direct their activities and that he was responsible for some training. The Provincial Commander is responsible to Saigon for increasing the size of the force, making promotions, receiving necessary material and for the majority of the training.

Functions: - The main function of the Civil Guard is to provide security for the province. This amounts to guarding bridges, sending patrols through the countryside, gathering information on subversive activities and like problems. They are not expected to investigate civil crimes, other than obtaining preliminary information which is turned over to the Gendarmes or the Surete. Under present conditions, with a military operation in the province, the Province Chief has no control over the Civil Guard as they are placed directly under the military. This has caused some confusion and seems to be one of the main complaints of the Province Chief.

INTERVIEWED MR. NGUYEN THE NHON, Provincial Commander of the Civil Guard - with the rank of Captain.

This is an older man, having served 27 years with the military and received several decorations. It is the opinion of the writer that he still carried the military rank, although there was some question that he may have retired. He has been Commander of the Civil Guard in My Tho for the past 3 months.

Strength: - Present strength of the Civil Guard is 1,518 men, divided into three (3) battalions. It is the opinion of the Captain that when the military leave the province, he will need more men to guarantee security.

Organization: - The province is divided into five (5) districts. The districts are divided into posts and guard towers, of which there are 52 posts and 15 guard towers. He, also, has five (5) mobile emergency platoons that can be dispatched to any section of the province. He states that he actually has 2 bosses. He worked directly under Major The and, at the same time, is responsible to Saigon Headquarters for technical supervision. He states he can furnish the Province Chief

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with Civil Guard officers on a loan basis; in which case, they are supervised by the Province Chief.

Pay: - The Captain informed us that cards are made out for each officer and that the cards have to be approved by the Province Chief and they are then presented to the Treasury Office in My Tho, where they receive their pay. It is not clear to the writer if the Province Chief has the authority to refuse to approve any of the pay cards.

Equipment: - The Captain states he has four (4) trucks and one (1) Land Rover for the province. He is allowed ten (10) liters of gasoline per horsepower per month for the vehicles. With the above number of vehicles, he receives 917 liters of gasoline per month. He states that he needs heavy trucks of the GMC type so that he can move platoons of men more freely in the province.

Functions: - It would seem that the Civil Guard of My Tho Province are typical policemen. The Captain stated that any work that no one else wanted to do was assigned to the Civil Guard; however, their main function is the security of the countryside, as well as the railroads, roads and other types of equipment. The Captain stated they had some control of the Peoples' Defense Corps, but he was not very clear on how this worked, other than the fact that the Civil Guard furnished most of the training for the Peoples' Defense Corps. He states his men do very little police work; that in any circumstance where they receive knowledge of a crime, either civil or political, it is turned over to the Surete or the Gendarmerie. He states there are ten (10) Gendarmerie officers in the province.

Communications: - The Civil Guard have one (1) 694 type radio set that permits them to contact Saigon and each of the neighboring provinces. He is able to contact three (3) of his district headquarters by telephone - the other two (2) district headquarters have radio communication that is on loan from the Army.

Trainings: - About one-third of the enlisted men have received basic training at Quang Trung. The Captain feels this training is very valuable. He states that he gives his men four (4) hours of training per week - one (1) of which is on the range, and three (3) of drill. This is true in all of the posts and districts.

Weapons: - All of his weapons are French - mostly of the machine gun type. He has no heavy weapons and states his weapons are in fair condition. He has not had any trouble with obtaining ammunition because he can requisition it from the military.

Reports: - The Captain says that his reports are sent directly to General Cai in Saigon.

INTERVIEWED MR. NGUYEN KIM QUE, Provincial Commander of the Surete Forces.

This interview was very brief due to lack of time. The Commander has only been in the province one (1) week, as he replaced the man that was shot about three weeks ago. He was formerly Surete Commander for the province of Long Xuyen. He stated he has fifty-three (53) men and one (1) jeep. The province is divided into four (4) field offices. He stated practically all of his work concerned political offenses. He sends reports directly to Saigon and to the Province Chief. The same system prevails here as in the other agencies, in that he is responsible to the Province Chief for administrative supervision, and to Saigon for technical supervision. He states that he is paid from the National Budget.

REMARKS: This report is not, by any means, all inclusive. All of the above interviews were made in one day. It is the opinion of the writer that in order to get an accurate picture, it would be necessary to talk to other individuals besides the commanders. It would seem, organization-wise, they are operating under the same type of organizational structure that existed prior to the present regime.

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