

OCTOBER 7, 1960

TO LLOYD D. MUSOLF
FROM RUBEN V. AUSTIN
SUBJECT NATIONAL IDENTITY PROGRAM

CERTAINLY THE COPY OF THE MEMORANDUM YOU SENT INFORMING US ABOUT THE DELAYS IN THE NATIONAL IDENTITY CARD PROGRAM IS A DOCUMENT THAT, THROUGH READING ITS CONTENTS, WE CAN INFER THE CURRENT POLITICAL TENSION AND FEARS THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF VIET-NAM APPEARS TO HAVE.

RVA:JR

cc A. F. BRANDSTATTER (WITH ENCLOSURE)

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

VIETNAM ADVISORY GROUP

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

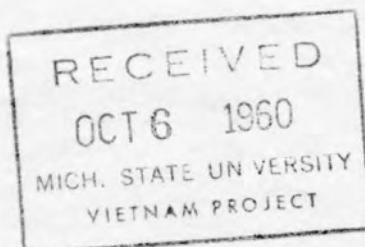
TO : Dr. Ruben V. Austin, Coordinator DATE : September 30, 1960
FROM : Dr. Lloyd D. Musolf, Chief Advisor *LDM*
SUBJECT : Attached Memorandum

The attached memorandum reviews a problem that has arisen within the past week. The problem was mentioned at a USOM meeting, and it was also taken up at a meeting Gardiner and Walton had with Secretary of State Thuan. Thuan expressed great surprise at the VBI announcement of a delay in the ID program, and he indicated that he would follow up to learn what the real story is.

We shall keep you informed of further developments.

LDM/dw

att: Cc memo to Gardiner, 9/27/60



cc: R. F. TURNER
E. H. Adkins

Mr. Arthur Z. Gardiner
Director of USOM

September 27, 1960

Dr. Lloyd D. Musolf, Chief Advisor

Delay in National Identity Card Program

The VBI has informed us that it will not be ready to begin the pilot project of the National Card Identity Program at Dalat until May, 1961. This announcement has come to us as a great surprise because this pilot program has been planned jointly by VBI and MSUG for some time.

The principal reason stated by the VBI for delay is that dollar exchange is not available for expendables (fingerprint cards, chemicals, etc.). Dollar exchange is said to be unavailable because the foreign aid program has been curtailed. Apparently the VBI (or GVN in general) is not willing to use the known foreign exchange reserves for this purpose. Would it be possible for you to discover whether dollars might be made available for the purchase of these supplies, when you see Mr. Thuan?

It must be said that the VBI has given other reasons for postponement of the program. These are:

- 1) The national election is scheduled for April, 1961, and the bulk of the GVN effort will be directed toward this end.
- 2) The VBI is concerned with police communications problems and the NIC program has lower priority.
- 3) There are other demands on the time of VBI personnel.
- 4) A concern that if the MSU advisors go the provinces the officials there would think Saigon did not have confidence in the latter.

We are not entirely convinced of the VBI's sincerity in giving these reasons. The facts are that the equipment purchased by the aid program is now on hand. The pilot project will take only nominal amounts of the supplies that GVN would furnish. Dalat and Quen-Duc Province have, between them, only some 60,000 persons to fingerprint. Security and province officials at both Dalat and Nha Trang state that they are

anxious to begin the program immediately. The VBI itself estimates that the Saigon-Cholon task will be completed by January, 1962. It is important to establish a testing program in the selected provinces prior to embarking on a national effort. The planning, training, logistics, and organization will take a minimum of three months for each project before the first actual processing of the public begins. Suppose that there were two consecutive pilot projects in the Dalat and Nha Trang areas; assuming further that testing could begin on November 1, it would be May 1 before the national effort could begin. By May, 1961, there will be only two police advisors left to handle the entire police program. Thus, from a standpoint of the availability of advisors and the availability of American-purchased hardware, we are of the opinion that the pilot program should go ahead by November 1 rather than beginning on May 1, as the VBI proposes.

Another factor bearing on the problem is that the security situation in the provinces of the Central Vietnam Highlands and Lowlands appears to be such that the processing can be completed at this time. It could well be that with the populace identified in these areas great strides could be made by GVN in strict control of any subversive movements there. Road blocks and check points mean very little unless tied in with a system of identity.

We would be particularly appreciative if you could check with Secretary of State Thuan on the question of the availability of dollars for the expendables that GVN was supposed to purchase as its share of the program. It might be well to point out that MSUG and the American aid program have kept their share of the bargain insofar as the provincial pilot program is concerned.

EDM/dw