

Special File
Memorandum for the Record

July 14, 1958

Meeting with Mr. Lam-Le-Trinh, Secretary of
State for the Interior, July 2, 1958

The above meeting was attended by: Mr. Trinh, Mr. Do Van Ro, Mr. Trinh's Chief of Cabinet and his personal secretary. MSU was represented by Dr. Ralph Smuckler, Dr. John Dorsey, Howard Hoyt and Jack Ryan.

The meeting was held in Mr. Trinh's office at the Department of Interior on Rue Tu-Do (ex Catinat).

Mr. Trinh stated that we would be concerned with general matters today and would get down to details at future meetings. He suggested we deal with the security problem, first, and public administration, second. He began the meeting by presenting a very brief review of the American Aid which has been furnished the Civil Police forces of Vietnam since 1955 in terms of direct dollar aid and also regarding counterpart piaster assistance. Mr. Trinh pointed out that the principal needs in terms of equipment at the present time are communications and transportation. He presented the situation wherein the apprehension of criminals is made exceedingly difficult when poor communications and no adequate means of transporting law enforcement officers exist. It was pointed out to Mr. Trinh that both of these problems would be solved to a great extent with the arrival of equipment which has been ordered under FY-57 funds.

Mr. Trinh then shifted the subject of the meeting and stated that he had had an opportunity of reviewing two reports which had been prepared by MSUG in 1956. These reports are (1) A Preliminary Report on the Proposed Re-organization of the Vietnamese Bureau of Investigation, and (2) Report on the Proposed Organization of the Law Enforcement Agencies of the Republic of Vietnam. With regard to the report on the VBI, Mr. Trinh stated that it is now out-of-date because some changes have been made in VBI headquarters organization since the report was written. Mr. Ryan pointed out that this was true to an extent but that most of the suggestions included in the report have not yet been implemented. Mr. Trinh's attention was called to the fact that formerly VBI headquarters personnel totalled about 150. Today, however, the number approaches 1,000. In 1956, two brief analyses were made relative to this particular problem. It was found that over fifty per cent of the personnel at Camp des Mares actually had nothing to do. It was further pointed out that since that time these people have continued to receive monthly pay checks for doing nothing. Mr. Trinh agreed that this problem

needs further study inasmuch as it does present an unnecessary expense to GVN and can certainly not be considered to be an efficient organizational structure.

Mr. Trinh stated that he found the second report, referred to above, to be very interesting. For example, Mr. Trinh reported that the concept of a National Security Council had already been implemented in the GVN. He advised that it consists of a council of ministers including himself, the Secretary of State for the Presidency, the Secretary of State for Information and Youth, and the Assistant Secretary for Defense. Mr. Trinh advised that his working committee consists of the Director Generals of the VBI and the Civil Guard, and the Commanders of the First and Fifth Military Districts. He stated that the National Security Council meets at least once per month. The working committee also meets once each month, however, more frequent meetings are held when important decisions are required.

Mr. Trinh reported that the Southern Region of Vietnam has been divided into two sections known as the Eastern Section and the Western Section. Separate monthly meetings of the province chiefs are held in each of the two sections. These meetings are presided over by Mr. Trinh and are also attended by the working committee of the National Security Council. He stated that a tentative agenda is worked out calling for answers to specific questions and is sent to each province chief before each meeting. The answers to the questions included in the agenda must be returned to the Ministry of Interior at least ten days prior to the monthly meeting in order that a complete report can be prepared for the meeting itself. These meetings are held in the provinces and shift from one province to another from month to month. This causes the various chiefs to move out of their own jurisdictions and affords them an opportunity to observe conditions in the various provinces through which they travel.

Each province chief is then called upon to make a verbal report at each meeting regarding the situation in his province as a supplement to the written report previously submitted to the Secretary of State for Interior. According to Mr. Trinh, whenever problems are presented, decisions are made and responsibilities are fixed on the spot. A report regarding each meeting is forwarded to each province chief involved within one week following the meeting. It is expected that each province chief will handle the problems brought up during the meeting and for which he was deemed responsible in terms of solution. It is further expected that the province chief will have discharged his responsibility during the period prior to the following meeting. At each meeting, the report relative to the previous meeting is reviewed before any new business is discussed. Mr. Trinh stated that acts as an excellent control over the activities of the various province chiefs.

In addition, Mr. Trinh declared that he makes frequent trips into the provinces himself in order to personally ascertain conditions there. He has also instructed the regional delegates and government inspectors to make inspection trips in the provinces from time to time. He declared that he had introduced another administrative control device, namely what

could be called an official visit register. The head of each administrative jurisdiction from the province chief down to the village head is expected to maintain one of these registers in which each visiting official shall sign his name, the date, his title or position, and a brief statement as to results of his visit. This facilitates the checking on the local administrators inasmuch as the inspecting official can review the register at a later date and establish whether or not remedial action had been taken relative to situations previously reported by said official in the register.

Mr. Trinh asserted that he has obliged each province chief to form a team consisting of representatives of the various administrative service organizations such as health, public works, etc. It is expected that these teams shall conduct inspection trips at least once a month into at least one region within the province about which little is known. The teams are required to develop information regarding these various areas in terms of conditions, population density, natural resources, etc. According to Mr. Trinh, the idea here is to increase the amount of knowledge relative to the possibility of developing these unknown areas. He stated that the mere development of a system of control of provincial administration is not the sole goal being sought. He stated that it is, in his opinion, far more important to develop a spirit of teamwork and individual volition to contribute.

Dr. Smuckler pointed out that since the arrival of MSUG in Vietnam in 1955, considerable progress has been noted within the field of law enforcement in Vietnam. However, he felt obliged to point out to the Minister that two important problems have yet to be faced and solved by GVN. The first of these is the delimitation of responsibility as to the laws to be enforced between the various civil police organizations now in existence in Vietnam. The second is the matter of clarifying relationships between the province chiefs and the Director General of the Police and Security Forces. Dr. Smuckler stated that these two problems will become more and more important and should be solved during the coming year or two.

Mr. Ryan pointed out that the province chiefs on the one hand and the Director General of Police and Security Forces on the other are both responsible to the Minister of Interior. Cases were explained by Mr. Ryan whereby province chiefs have frequently interfered in the operations of the VBI to the point where many of these operations resulted in failure. These were the results of non-professional police officials being permitted to overrule the decisions of such police officials. In some instances it is impossible for the Director General of the VBI to transfer one agent from one province to another without first securing the approval of the province chiefs involved. It would seem far more logical and efficient for policies to be developed whereby dissatisfactions of a province chief relative to the operation of the VBI within his province could be brought to the attention of the Minister of Interior through the normal chain of command. The Minister of Interior then could ask for a complete report on the matter from the Director General of the VBI. The final decisions, then, would be made at the top echelon and would not be made in the province without the approval of Saigon. This would eliminate considerable friction at the province level and would permit the Director General of the VBI to assume actual control of the organization while still remaining

personally responsible to the Minister of Interior. Furthermore, such a system would permit the solving and handling of various problems by those professionals responsible.

Regarding the delimitation of responsibility under the law, Mr. Ryan cited instances where following the commission of a crime, representatives of several police organizations were on the scene which resulted in confusion and an almost impossibility of solving the crime. It was suggested to the Minister that a committee be appointed with representatives of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice, with a view of codifying all criminal violations in Vietnam. The committee could then present to the Assembly its recommendations as to which police organization would be responsible for the investigation of each violation, including the matter of geographical jurisdiction. As a result, both the police and the population would know exactly who would be responsible for the investigation of each type of violation in each territorial jurisdiction throughout the country.

Mr. Trinh remarked that the solutions to both of these problems as presented could be considered ideal. However, he pointed out that considerable work would have to be done and that many problems would certainly arise at high levels within GVN. Dr. Smuckler countered this statement by remarking that ideals are often the starting point from which actual practical applications are derived.

Mr. Trinh declared that during the coming year he intends to place considerable emphasis on the matter of training, reorganization, and equipment within the Police and Security Forces. Dr. Smuckler stated that MSUG would be only too happy to lend whatever assistance it could in this program.

In concluding the portion of the meeting dealing with the Police and Security Forces, Mr. Trinh agreed that additional meetings should be held in the future. He stated that reorganizational plans are being studied in his Ministry and suggested that MSUG prepare a detailed briefing concerning various suggestions and recommendations for presentation at the next meeting. Dr. Smuckler agreed that this would be done.

Mr. Trinh stated that, in addition to the above problems of police administration and security, he would like to discuss three problems of interest to the MSUG Public Administration Division.

First, he asked about the status of the consulting requests made recently to NIA and MSUG, for information on such matters as the law on requisitions, on immigration control, and the status of foreign religious organizations. Dr. Dorsey explained that although neither MSUG nor NIA had personnel specially qualified to make recommendations in these fields, NIA had reached agreement with the Presidency to establish a three-man committee for each problem (one person from NIA, one from MSUG, and one from the Department of Interior) to define the problem and to assemble relevant documentation--principally laws and regulations--on the manner of dealing with these matters

in foreign countries. It was further explained that the shortage of personnel meant that all such problems could not be dealt with simultaneously, although MSUG was extremely anxious to cooperate with the Government in meeting these requests.

It was pointed out that a letter had been sent to the Rector of the NIA concerning a recent request from Interior to translate a set of materials on labor regulation. Translation of these materials would require about one man-year, or, alternatively, about 85,000\$VN if the job were contracted. Because of previous commitments, MSUG could not undertake this assignment. Instead, MSUG had proposed establishing the usual 3-man committee, which would define the need as precisely as possible, assemble a more directly focussed documentation, and prepare a short analysis of legal approaches to the problem in selected countries.

As for the question of municipal administration, another consulting request from Interior, Mr. Trinh was informed that NIA and MSUG had scheduled a major research project in this area which would be undertaken when completion of current projects permitted assigning personnel to it.

Mr. Trinh's second question concerned the method of participant selection. He stated that the method used this year, allowing civil servants to apply independently of their supervisors, had produced a number of applications from unqualified persons. Also, the GVN had not had an adequate opportunity to rationally allocate the grants being offered among the various fields of specialization. Dr. Smuckler and Dr. Dorsey agreed fully that better means of allocation and selection are needed, but pointed out the disadvantage of nomination by hierarchical superiors: agency heads are reluctant to release their more capable staff members and often designate less competent personnel. It was agreed that the Minister of Interior would be consulted in advance in the allocation of next year's MSUG grants, and that he would be asked to propose persons for grants relating to jobs in his jurisdiction. The basic procedure of selection would not be changed, and these consultations would constitute an informal means of rationalizing the allocations and improving the quality of grantees.

The final question raised by Mr. Trinh was whether MSUG could assist in establishing a small library of basic materials in public administration for the Department of Interior. Dr. Smuckler assured him that this might be done as a branch of the NIA library. A collection of basic materials of which the NIA has more than one copy could be placed on long-term loan to the Department, and replaced by others after a period of several months. In the general discussion which followed, the suggestion was made that perhaps a smaller collection of certain materials available in Vietnamese could be made to constitute a "shelf" of public administration literature to be placed in each province office.

Dr. Dorsey agreed to examine these possibilities with the NIA and the MSUG library advisor, and to prepare a specific proposal for the extension of such library services.

The meeting concluded after expressions by both Mr. Trinh and Dr. Smuckler of the desirability of such meetings as this one, and it was agreed that such meetings, possibly on more detailed problems, would be repeated in the future.

cc: Dr. John T. Dorsey, Jr.

✓ Mr. Howard Hoyt

Mr. Jack Ryan