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PERSONAL

TO: Coordinator

FROM: Chief Advisor *Not signed*

SUBJECT: Thong Visit

I found your statement of September 30 to be extremely interesting. I am sending you a copy of the note which Ed Pike received from his Asia Foundation headquarters in San Francisco. It is rather amusing to note the conservative tone of the Asia Foundation statement as compared to the rather optimistic tone of previous reports I had received on the Asia Foundation meeting.

I am sorry that the Rockefeller Foundation door does not appear to be open. Perhaps it was not open in the first place and Thong did not lose anything by visiting there. I think the Ford Foundation is fully justified in voicing its reservations, and it is too bad that the door there is not wider than you indicate in your memorandum.

It is too bad that the Rockefeller and Ford people did not fully recognize the highly tentative nature of this whole thing. While it is true various principles have been put forth on paper, it is also true that the paper had not yet been circulated and obviously the plan would have to go through various revisions. If Thong's visit had been slated for several months later, something more concrete might have been offered to Mr. Evans when he raised the questions he did. As it is, he may have an unfortunate opinion of the Center which will have to be corrected over the next few years by keeping him informed of its development.

I do not know what to make of your firm conclusion that Thong views the NIA and EROPA Center as so separate. I agree that they must be kept apart in some ways, but I was quite sure that he felt the close and cooperative relationship of the two to be important. We will have to see what happens now that he is back.

As far as the role of MSUG is concerned with the EROPA Center, only Thong feels that we are not related to it. And even Thong did not feel this way before his departure since he drew very heavily on us and has made various requests for assistance. While we have no contractual tie, the fact that the Center is in public administration is a pretty good indication of the fact that we will be used in developing it.

The situation here is very ambiguous and various decisions will have to be made by the President before it can be clarified. The name of the director is a first step which has been awaiting Thong's return. The other key positions will also have to be filled. Any comments I would make on these possible appointments would be pure speculation at this time. Since the constitution of EROPA has never been ratified and, to my knowledge, Manila has not even sent out the request for ratification, it is even possible that the Center will die before it gets started.

I am surprised to hear about the \$5,000 for documentation. I am afraid that a sum of that size would be politically sound but economically foolish. The Center would have no idea as to what to do with the money, and just to bring in a pile of documents would do more harm than good until the plans are more firmly settled and a few positions filled.

As for the possibility of working through Ramos or Menon, neither of them has made a single move, to my knowledge, to do anything at all about the organization. As far as I know, Menon has not even started to think about what he will do with the training center in India.

Thong arrived on Saturday and was met at the VIP entrance by about 25 or 30 Vietnamese officials from the Assembly and the Institute and six or seven MSUG staff members. He seemed to have lost weight on the trip but looked quite healthy. Today is the opening of the National Assembly, and I imagine he is going to be tied up for some days before I will be able to have a good talk with him. I will let you know as soon as I have some reactions.

Incidentally, I might add that from the standpoint of strategy it is good that nobody discussed the business administration curriculum possibilities with Thong. I hope you have impressed Dean

Seelye with the highly tentative nature of this thing and that he realizes that the initiative to discuss the matter must come from the Government rather than from us. While we will be making certain statements to them which might stimulate their using that initiative, discussion of the matter in East Lansing would have been unfortunate since Thong would have felt this to be much too preliminary a matter to be of such concern back in East Lansing. When Dean Seelye is out here, we may get into this.

RHS/dcm

Enclosure