



BRITISH EMBASSY,  
WASHINGTON.

November 3, 1961.

Office of the Secretary of Defense 5 U.S.C. 552  
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS  
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MDR: 12 -M- 3101

Dear General Taylor,  
Mr. Thompson has asked for  
the enclosed copy of his report  
to be sent to you for your  
information.

Yours sincerely,

*David Amshy*

General Maxwell Taylor,  
The White House,  
Washington, D.C.

DOS

RECOMMEND FULL RELEASE

12-M-3101 R-2

cc #

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APPRECIATION OF VIETNAM

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November 1961 - April 1962

Assumption

It is assumed that there will be no global war during this period and that the Communists are not likely to want Vietnam to become the cause even of a large scale local war which might inevitably spread into a world war. In these circumstances, while there will certainly be increased infiltration and outside supply, the Communists will keep it to a scale and a type which cannot easily be classified as overt aggression.

Communist intentions

2. The Communist Terrorist intentions during the period are likely to be:-

- (a) increased control and domination of the population, particularly in the rural areas and among the Montagnards;
- (b) the destruction of the administration and of the economy in the Delta and the Terre Rouge;
- (c) preparing for the declaration of a liberated mountain area and the proclamation of a peoples' government;
- (d) the cutting of land communications to the north without attempting to hold a complete wedge across the country; and
- (e) the development of the threat to Saigon, including the build up of the Maquis D area, infiltration into the city and penetration of the Army and administration.

In carrying these out, (c) and (d) will be regarded as complementary to (a), (b) and (e) and will have the subsidiary purpose of diverting Government Forces from the populated areas where the real threat lies.

Situation

3. There has been a marked deterioration in the situation over the last 12 months and, with the coming of the dry season

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this is now likely to snowball. The strength of the Communist Terrorists is estimated to be about 17,000 armed men and, during the period under review, this could increase by infiltration and local recruitment (and in spite of casualties) to 25,000 - 30,000. More alarming is the grip now exercised over the rural population which could lead to a critical economic situation at the end of the period when the rice harvest is due. Rice exports have ceased and local stocks are estimated to be very low. Due partly to floods but mainly to terrorism, the next rice harvest could be almost a complete failure. It is also certain that rubber production only continues at the present time because the terrorists gain more by levying "protection money" than they do by stopping production. Due to their control over the labour forces it could, however, be stopped completely at any time.

4. There is therefore every prospect that, without the Army being heavily engaged and certainly not defeated, the Communists will be able to carry out their intentions and that a very critical situation will develop throughout the country and particularly in Saigon by the end of the period under review.

National Policy

5. There seems to be little appreciation that this is a struggle to win the hearts and minds of the people and not just a battle to kill armed communist terrorists. The Government does not seem to be able to get away from a purely anti-communist line and there is an unfortunate tendency to try to contradict communist policy and propaganda instead of countering it with an attractive and constructive appeal.

6. This can best be explained by reference to the President's

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speech in the Assembly on October 2. This started with a long tirade against international and local communism, which might sound well in the Western press but which only serves locally to publicize communist achievements and the "inevitability" of their final victory. It was also full of gratitude for foreign aid. All this breeds a malaise in the local Vietnamese so that he regards himself as a mere pawn in an international struggle which will not be decided by him.

7. The main Government policy should be national reconstruction and development, i.e. the war against under-development. Targets should be set and achievements stated and any under-achievement can then be blamed on the communists, thus meeting the communist approach to the people at the vital point. One of the themes should be that, to achieve the national policy, the people themselves must beat the Communists then the country will be able to live in peace and prosperity without the need of any foreign advisers.

8. A minor but important point is that the terrorists should not be referred to as the Vietcong. This affords them a degree of recognition as a national opposition party instead of as supporters of an alien creed and a foreign power. No Government propaganda will be successful until communism is completely disassociated from patriotism.

#### Government Forces

9. It is considered that the Government forces are, with the reservations and exceptions in paragraphs 10 and 11 below, adequate both in manpower and equipment. Compared with the worst period in Malaya the Government of Vietnam has a higher ratio of security forces to terrorist forces (about 14:1 as compared with 8:1). The main weakness lies in the fact that

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the army/police ratios are reversed, which makes the problem of dominating and controlling the populated rural areas more difficult. The Army does not, and cannot, have the same rapport with the local population as the Police.

10. There would appear to be three main training problems:

- (a) there is an admitted shortage of good junior leaders. Since this is a lieutenants' and not a generals' war, top priority should be given to this training problem in respect of both the Army and the civil Guard.
- (b) For selected units including the majority of the Ranger Companies jungle training is also required. According to the President no unit is capable of operating in the jungle for periods of more than three-four days without returning for supplies; they all suffer from foot trouble (jungle boots?) and many of them just get lost.
- (c) It is also understood that many units have been in continued operations for up to two years and are greatly in need of recuperation and retraining. Morale is a vital factor and the policy in Malaya, which was sacrosanct whatever the situation, was to take out each battalion for retraining for three months out of every 12.

This may make it necessary to reconsider the Army's expansion programme. There comes a time in all campaigns when it may be better to improve what you have got rather than try to increase it, thereby diluting the whole. Anti-guerilla operations are of such a nature that quality is better than quantity and Gideon's Law should be observed. This does not mean that certain specialist expansion and training (e.g. wireless operators) should not continue and also the training of sufficient recruits to keep units up to strength.

11. The following would appear to be the main deficiencies in

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equipment:

- (a) Transport and supply aircraft (e.g. C 47's, helicopters and Stal aircraft): if the threat is to be met, it will be essential during the next six months for units up to battalion strength to be able to operate in the Highlands, particularly along the Laos frontier, away from their bases for periods of up to six weeks.
- (b) Marine and river patrol craft: These are essential for preventing infiltration from the North by sea but, more particularly, so that the rivers and canals of the Delta can be completely dominated by the security forces. The craft for the latter role should be lightly armoured and should be capable of carrying a minimum of about 15 men, a wireless set and a mounted automatic.
- (c) Wireless sets: A cast-iron static Government communication network operating vertically from Saigon down to the smaller guard posts with lateral communication to immediate neighbours at each level is vital. It is understood that this is in hand. It should be given the greatest priority and particularly in the Delta area.

Recommendations

12. This is not the time to carry out major surgical operations on the patient but, if his life is to be saved and not just temporarily prolonged, the following remedies are recommended:

- (a) The Government machine for directing and coordinating military, police and civil action against the terrorists must be simplified and overhauled so as to achieve completely coordinated action at all levels. The re-organisation must take into account the existing system

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and the operational plan.

At the moment nearly every aspect is in watertight compartments and the left hand has not got a clue what the right hand is doing. Such coordination as exists appears to be almost solely at the Presidential level (though a few Chefs de Province may achieve it to some extent). This can only lead to ineffectiveness and frustration at the sharp end. Without this re-organization and a proper direction of the campaign all other recommendations are virtually useless. It must be completed within two months.

- (b) An overall operational plan defining responsibilities, tasks and priorities must be produced.

There is every indication that the initiative at the present moment rests with the terrorists and that the Government of Vietnam is merely doing its best to meet situations as they arise. The whole outlook is therefore completely defensive, however aggressive individual intentions may be. This is a war of attrition and, due to the way in which it is being handled, the attrition is going against the Government. Unless the plan can be in operation and having effect on the ground within 5-6 months, it may be too late.

The aim of the plan must be to regain the initiative and put the terrorists on the defensive. For this purpose it is essential that the mobility of the Army should be restored. At the present moment Army units are practically gummed to the map with hardly any mobile reserves. By giving first priority to the Delta and establishing there a static police framework (mainly Civil Guard), it should be possible to relieve one of the divisions in

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the Delta for mobile operations initially against the threat to Saigon and subsequently against the threat to the Highlands. (An outline plan on these lines is now being prepared detailing military, police and civil tasks.)

- (c) A static security framework should be established and can best be provided by amalgamating the National Police, Civil Guard and Sûreté, thereby creating a national police force. This could be achieved in stages starting with Delta. It is considered that it could be done without any disruption particularly if some further ex-Malayan policemen could be provided. The Police force should also become responsible for the static Government communication network and the Self Defence Corps, supported by the Police, would become part of the static framework.
- (d) Within this national police force a single security intelligence organisation should be established and dovetailed at all levels to the static security framework. The present organisation is so confused that, for all practical purposes, there is no reliable intelligence. There is certainly no direction of effort without which there can be no concentration on the targets which really matter.

The Sûreté is the obvious existing institution which should form the basis of the new organisation. While operations against the terrorists continue, it should also have attached to it at all appropriate levels a military tactical branch which would then automatically provide all army units with their local intelligence link.

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(e) An adequate stockpile of rice should be earmarked, of which at least 50,000 tons must be available for import immediately it is required. It may also be necessary to bolster the exchequer.

13. But, above all, the Government must go all out to win the people and to involve them in the war against the terrorists. This requires that they should be protected and, where temporarily they cannot be protected, they should be contacted frequently but not harried. A greater air of confidence must be stimulated, and, if there is to be any hope for Vietnam's future, the victory must be won by the Vietnamese themselves.

(R.G.K. Thompson)

October 27, 1961

British Advisory Mission,  
Saigon.

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