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File #

MEMORANDUM

RAND
JUN 25 1971
6129667

DATE: 12/29/66

MEMO NO. M-8402

TO: [Redacted]
FROM: [Redacted]

SUBJECT: Report to General Westmoreland on the Behavior of ROK Troops. (U)

COPIES TO: [Redacted]

In the course of our interviews with VC military and civilian personnel, statements were made which suggested that the ROK units fighting in South Vietnam were unusually brutal in their treatment of the civilian population. The interviews also suggested that the units in Phu Yen Province were more disliked and feared by the population than those in Binh Dinh Province.

Because of the smallness of our data base and the sensitivity of this question we have avoided discussing it in previously published reports. During Dr. Herzfeld's visit to Saigon, I mentioned this data to him. Herzfeld urged me to tell General Westmoreland about it or to send him a report on it. He believed that General Westmoreland was not fully informed about the behavior of the Korean Troops in their contact with civilians. In another conversation with General Fritz Freund urged me to prepare a list of quotes from our interviews concerning the behavior of the Korean Troops and offered to show them to General Westmoreland.

Russ Betts prepared the quotes and I wrote the introductory statement, pointing out the limitations of the sample and that the information was unevaluated and unverified. I gave two copies to General Freund. He told me that General Westmoreland was very interested and at his departure to the Phillipines had told General Freund that he wished to discuss this matter with him first thing on his return.

Except for the two copies given to General Freund no other copies were distributed. However, I learned from Colonel Patterson (Director RDFU/ARPA) that HSR in its study of refugees had also collected a great deal of adverse information on the behavior of Korean Troops. HSR was being urged to delete this information from its general report (where there was to be a whole chapter devoted to it) and instead, has been asked by ARPA to prepare a special report on this subject which would be given only very limited distribution.

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Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: JUL 2 2 2013

Leon Gouré

LG/sal

Encl. "Mentions of Korean Troop Activities in RAND Interviews" (U)
December 30, 1966, 14 pp., ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~. [1 copy]

[Redacted box]

13-M-2894

Encl. to M-8402

The RAND Corporation
December 6, 1966

MENTIONS OF KOREAN TROOP ACTIVITIES
IN RAND INTERVIEWS (U)

RAND
JUN 25 1971
W29667
WASH. OFFICE

The following quotes concerning the activities and behavior of Republic of Korea troops in South Vietnam were extracted from RAND interviews with Viet Cong captives, ralliers and civilian refugees. It must be emphasized that no effort has been made to ascertain the veracity of the statements made by the interviewees. The interviews represent a small sample of purported observation, hearsay, and opinion, and it is not possible to determine from them the actual prevalence of these incidents or opinions among VC personnel and civilians. The quotes are, therefore, provided without any evaluation of their significance and with no effort to draw any conclusions from them.

The earliest of the cited interviews was conducted in March 1966, while the most recent was completed in mid-November 1966. The majority of the interviews were conducted following August 1966. Because of some variations in the interviewees' responses by area, the citations in the text below distinguish between interviewees from Phu Yen Province and those from Binh Dinh Province. A distinction was also made, where possible, between purported eyewitness accounts and reports based on second-hand information.

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Date: JUL 22 2003

Office of the Secretary of Defense S O S C 5552
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS
Date: 22 JUL 2013 Authority: EO 13526
Declassify: X Deny in Full: _____
Declassify in Part:
Reason: 5 USC 5552 (b)(6)
MDR: 13-M-2894

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~GROUP 1~~
Excluded from automatic downgrading and declassification

I. PHU YEN PROVINCE

A. Accounts of Personal Experiences

1. A refugee from Van Loc Hamlet, Hoa My Village, Hieu Xuong District, described what happened in his hamlet two days before Tet of 1966. This subject became a refugee immediately following this event:

The Korean troops walked into my hamlet at noon. The hamlet was emptied of people then. Seeing fire rising from the communication trenches, we knew that the soldiers were burning our paddy. As the village was bombed too often, we were afraid to keep our paddy in the house, for fear that the houses might be bombed out and our paddy with them. That's why we kept it in the communication trenches. The people were afraid that the troops might burn all the paddy and the houses. An elderly man proposed that we select ten more old people to form a delegation to walk to the hamlet and ask for a stop to the burning of the paddy. The delegation of eleven old men walked toward the hamlet. When they were near, they found that the troops were Koreans. Knowing that the language barrier wouldn't let their request come through, the men turned on their heels and walked back to the field. A Korean soldier waved at them and signaled them to come back. They all did. The Koreans took them to the hamlet, lined them up on the edge of a communication trench, and without a word, shot them all. Ten men died instantly. Another one was wounded and fell down, but didn't die. It was this man who told me about the incident later on. This irrational killing wasn't unique. From what I heard from the people, that very morning a similar incident had taken place in neighboring Thanh Phu Hamlet of the same village. Early that morning, the Korean troops came into Thanh Phu Hamlet. Most of the people had run into the field at the time. Only 50 villagers still lagged behind. Most of them were women, children, and elderly people. The Korean soldiers rounded them up in one place. The people thought that they were to be evacuated to the GVN-controlled areas by helicopters. That's why they all were glad. When the people were grouped together, the Koreans suddenly pointed their guns to the crowd and opened fire. Only two babies of two and three survived. They crawled on their mothers' bellies. After seeing those who were killed in my hamlet, and

hearing about the massacre of Thanh Phu Hamlet, the people were frightened. Nobody dared come into the hamlet. They all tried to run toward the GVN-controlled areas. That night everybody slept in the field in the neighboring hamlet. We stayed there for two days, then ran to the GVN-controlled areas. Those who reached here after us, said that a number of old people, women and children couldn't make it here on time. They were all shot to death by the Koreans. All in all, there were nearly 100 persons killed in my hamlet, 36 of them were children.

This same refugee described his and the villagers' reactions to such incidents, and also compared the Koreans to the Vietnamese and the Americans:

We didn't mind much if the sweeps were carried out by GVN troops, but the people were frightened and resentful against the Korean troops' operations. Everybody agreed that the Koreans were barbarous. They went on operation without interpreters going along. They killed at random without distinguishing between the rights and the wrongs. Some people said that it was because the VC mixed themselves with the villagers, and thus the Koreans couldn't help making a mistake. I don't think their reasoning was right. I don't see why the Koreans should kill the children. Kids of two, three, or even five or seven years weren't VC. They also burned the paddy and the people's houses. They burned the cow pens and the animals inside too. Cows are certainly not VC! These soldiers carried out operations against the VC. Their barbarous acts were entirely unnecessary. Refugees who had come to Hieu Xuong District Town from other areas told me that the American troops also carried out operations in the villages, but they never burned the people's houses, they never shot anybody to death, they only killed the VC. The Americans don't understand Vietnamese either, yet why didn't they make the same mistakes as the Koreans? I don't think the fact that the Koreans killed innocent people, and burned up the people's houses and cattle is simply a mistake. I think they deliberately did it, or was it because they were driven by their natural barbarism?

2. Another refugee from the same area described the incident in Thanh Phu Hamlet, mentioned above, as well as the villager and VC reaction to it:

Two days before Tet, the Korean troops, who had landed from helicopters and taken positions on the hills, carried out an operation in my area. They came first to ~~Thanh Phu hamlet~~ which was located near the foot of the mountain. All the villagers fled from the hamlet to take refuge in the neighboring woods. Meanwhile, the Korean troops fired at the hamlet and set it on fire. The people who had been hiding near their houses ran back to the hamlet and tried to put out the fire. Seeing that, the Korean troops summoned the villagers out, asked them to stand in a line and, in cold blood, raked them with machine-gun fire. About fifty people were killed. Then those troops moved down to my hamlet where they clashed with two platoons of Front Guerrillas who had been staying there. The guerrillas slipped away after a short while, leaving my hamlet at the mercy of Korean fire which caused fifteen casualties to the civilian population.

All the people in the village, including village cadres, were so afraid of the Korean troops that most of them left the area to take refuge in Tuy Hoa city.

3. A civilian prisoner, who worked as a Village Military Proselyting Cadre in Hoa Phong Village, Hieu Xuong District, discussed the effect the presence of Korean troops had on the villagers and, more importantly, on the VC organization and infrastructure:

Last Tet, the Korean troops came there (Hoa Phong Village) for the first time. They called more than ten villagers together and kept them in line abreast, in front of Sat mountain. Then they fired at those people, killing them all. The villagers, frightened, all ran away to the mountain or to other places. The cadres were also very afraid because they thought that if even the villagers were killed like that, they would get the same lot with greater reason if they went on staying there. They all fled. They were so scared that, more recently when the villagers met them and asked for their help, they impudently denied that they were cadres.

B. Accounts of Second-Hand Information

1. A military prisoner who had infiltrated from North

Vietnam and who was serving as a nurse in a VC Local Force unit (1st Co., 30th Bn.), describes incidents involving the Korean troops in the same general area. He also discussed villager reaction:

The Korean troops came in by helicopters. They burned down the houses. To tell you the truth, when the Korean troops came, they called all the old women and children down in the trenches to come up. Then these people were told to sit in circles. Afterwards, the Korean troops machine-gunned them. This was told to us by the local people.

They said the Korean troops were extremely cruel. They said before the Korean troops came in, they heard broadcasts urging them to stay in their houses and not come out to the fields. But when the Korean troops came, they made the people sit in circles and machine-gunned them. The people said that the broadcasts told lies.

In discussing a battle in which he took part, this subject also mentions the effect the Korean presence had on his unit:

Psychologically speaking, the members of the unit were well prepared. They were told about the killings and burning of houses committed by the Korean troops in the areas where they raided. We were told that this was the best chance for us to fight the enemy. The enemy came to us. Also, it would be the first battle of the year and so we were all very enthusiastic. My comrades fulfilled their mission. The reason I was captured was because I was wounded. One of my comrades was wounded and I put on the bandage for him. Meanwhile, I was wounded too. He is now in the hospital. My wounds healed before his and so I got out of the hospital before him.

2. A rallier who had served as a guerrilla in Phuoc Den Hamlet, Hoa Xuan Village, Hieu Xuong District, described events which he claims took place in early May, 1966, and discussed the villagers' reactions:

- Q. How did the Korean troops behave towards the people?
- A. If they heard gunfire anywhere, they would come in and kill all the people there. Just recently, they

killed about 53 persons, including women and children, in Tho Long Hamlet, Hoa Hiep Village (Hieu Xuong District, Phu Xuong Province.)

- Q. Why did the Korean troops kill these people?
- A. I was told that when the Korean troops approached that village, the VC threw some hand grenades and killed two Korean soldiers. They got mad and killed all the villagers.
- Q. What did the villagers say about the Korean troops?
- A. The people complained very much. They said that the VC were armed and the Korean troops were armed. If the VC ordered the villagers to do this or that, the villagers had to obey. There was nothing they could do about that. The Korean troops were supposed to find and kill the VC. Why did they kill the people? The people were unarmed and couldn't resist. The people were very unhappy. They were afraid of the VC and of the Korean troops. They complained very much.
- Q. What else did the Korean troops do to the villagers?
- A. When they came to the VC-controlled areas -- areas further back -- they raped the women in these areas. There were times they killed the women after they had raped them. I heard that just recently some women were raped and killed. The people were so frightened of the Korean troops, they didn't dare to stay in their homes but moved away. They have all moved away.

3. A rallier who was the head of his hamlet's Civilian Laborers' Affairs Section in My Phong Hamlet, Hoa Dong Village, Hieu Xuong District, described the fear the villagers hold for the Koreans, and compared the Koreans with the Americans:

The villagers didn't accuse and condemn the GVN for the air-attacks. It's not the same with the Koreans who burnt houses and killed people everywhere they were attacked by the VC snipers. They threw grenades into trenches where people were taking cover. They considered black clad people and youths VC and fired at those who ran away. Whenever they had an interpreter among them, they didn't do harm and were friendly with the people. For instance, they offered the villagers cigarettes.

When there were no interpreters, people were terrified. People said the GVN and the Americans were good. The Americans have been here a long time and they didn't kill people. The Koreans just came and they killed a lot of people and burnt houses. That was the opinion of my fellow villagers, as well as that of people I met in the market or on the roads. The Americans didn't come to my village, but people at the markets said that about them.

4. A refugee from Hieu Xuong District, describes the effect the presence of Korean troops has on villager's choices in selecting places to relocate or take refuge:

I heard the refugees saying that the Koreans are very cruel and ferocious. Wherever the Korean soldiers went, if they heard gunshots, they would gather all the people in the hamlet -- men, women, and children -- and kill them all. This happened at many places, such as in My Thanh Village, Hieu Xuong District. That's why everyone is afraid of the Koreans. All the refugees try to avoid the Koreans. If they hear that Korean troops are stationed in a certain GVN zone, then they would never dare go there.

II. BINH DINH PROVINCE

A. Accounts of Personal Experiences

1. A rallier who had been a fighter in a provincial local force mobile unit (3d Platoon, D37 Company, E25 Battalion) described the opinions he and his unit had of the Korean forces in Binh Dinh Province:

The South Koreans had the same tactics and fighting techniques as the VC and when attacked, put up a very strong resistance. The South Koreans were very brave and they never retreated in the face of the VC fire. This is why the VC were afraid of them.

We've encountered an operation by the South Koreans. This operation by the South Koreans demoralized the VC because the South Koreans were too strong for the VC. I, myself, was so shaken by the operation that I decided to rally.

This rallier also described the villager reaction to a Korean operation:

When the GVN forces attacked the village, the people thought that it would be very difficult for the GVN to retake the village. But when the Korean "Tiger" Division conducted a search and destroy operation in the village for the first time, the people saw their strength, their modern equipment, and their excellent fighting techniques, so the villagers thought that the GVN and the allied forces could easily liberate the village.

2. Two refugees, both from Phu Cat District, mention a highly favorable impression of Korean behavior vis-a-vis the rural population. Both of these subjects took refuge in mid-August 1966.

The Korean troops conducted sweep operations in my area. When they entered my village after the fighting, they showed a blameless behavior. They didn't plunder the villagers and, quite the contrary, helped the poor and the war victims.

Most of the villagers at first insulted the Americans, the GVN and the Koreans. Soon after getting in contact with the Korean troops, they forgot their anger because they found that those troops were correct and gave them a lot of help.

Q. Did the Korean troops cause much damage to the villagers?
A. To tell the truth, compared with the Civil Guards, the Korean troops fired less. The people were frightened and hid in their trenches. The Korean troops didn't burn down the people's houses, but the Civil Guards set fire to any houses they suspected of belonging to the VC. To tell the truth, some of the Civil Guards were good, some weren't. The Korean troops haven't set fire to any homes in my village.

However, the second subject quoted above also reported the following incident:

To tell the truth, some elements in the Civil Guards displeased the people. They stole chickens and burned down people's houses. As for the Korean troops, they haven't done anything to displease the villagers.

Sometime in March, at night, the women moved out of their village. The men had left earlier. They went to My Long where the Korean troops were stationed.

~~There were many women and children. The Korean troops thought they were VC and machine-gunned them.~~

About 20 or 30 women, including children, were killed. My uncle's daughter-in-law was killed too.

It was nighttime, the Korean troops thought these women and children were VC.

3. A rallier, who had served as a private in a Main Force unit in Phu Cat District, described the "Binh Yen" battle of March 1966, in which his unit engaged the Koreans:

My company had been in the village for half a month to do production work when one morning, while going to our rice-fields, we were encircled by a Korean regiment. We scattered and fought from 5:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Our company had 75 dead; only 25 men were left. Only my company participated in the battle. After it, our morale was very low. Among the cadres, only the company political officer and two platoon cadres were left; the others had been killed.

B. Accounts Based on Second-Hand Information

1. A rallier, who was a Senior Lieutenant and who served as Company Commander for 17th (Mortar) Co., 18th Regt., of the Sao Vang Division, offered this interpretation of the Front's evaluation of the American forces, the ARVN, and the ROK troops:

- Concerning the American troops: The Americans have the advantage of airplanes and artillery. But they may lose this advantage if they keep fighting close to their enemy. The American troops have little war experience, are not well acquainted with the terrain, are not used to the climate, are not well trained for the jungles, and are so big that they constitute easy targets. They lack courage; that is why every time they planned to attack somewhere, they would first bomb and shell the place until it was completely demolished; only then would they dare to come.

- Concerning the ARVN: They are fighting with no purpose in mind; they are weak in spirit and afraid to die; ~~their discipline is loose; they are fighting~~ because of the salaries they get from the Americans, they are not fighting for any ideals.

- Concerning the ROK troops: They are the most cruel; wherever they fight, they kill and burn everything.

He also offered his opinions on this VC evaluation:

I don't think the Front's point that the American troops lack courage is right. When engaged in battles, I and many other friends found that the American soldiers too would fight to the end. As soon as our side had fired a couple of shots, they would launch an assault right away. As for the contention that the ARVN troops are weak in spirit and afraid to die, I don't think it is entirely true. There are many ARVN units, such as the paratroopers, that fight hard and well, which caused the liberation troops to worry. But there were also units that fled in confusion once their commanders were killed. As for the remarks that the ROK troops are cruel, I believe it is right. The people said so many times and hated them very much.

2. An NVA prisoner, who was a Labor Youth member, and who held the rank of corporal with the 4th Company, 200th Battalion (dependent upon the Sao Vang Division), related what he had heard from villagers regarding the Korean soldiers and their comparison with American soldiers:

I have heard people living in VC-controlled hamlets, who had left the Delta for the mountains, say that Korean soldiers were very barbarous and cruel: they would come into Front-controlled hamlets and would kill every person they met, including women, old people and children. They would also set fire to the villagers' homes. The people had said they had never seen more cruel soldiers.

The villagers made a comparison between American and Korean soldiers. Many said the Americans, when they come into VC-controlled hamlets, would just arrest all the men they met, but would never touch either

women or children. They would arrest the men and take them away, but would not ill-treat nor shoot nor kill any of the prisoners. Also, they would never destroy private property. Sometimes they would even give first-aid treatment to wounded civilians, especially children, and would take care of them. On the contrary, Koreans would not have any consideration and would shoot at anyone they meet in the hamlet.

3. An NVA rallier, who served as a Private in the 1st Squad, DKZ 75 Platoon, 4th Company, 6th Battalion, 95th Regiment, of the 325th Division, related a general opinion which he felt both the "Revolutionary Forces" and "the people" had of the Koreans:

The Revolutionary Forces mostly hated the Korean troops because they killed and raped people. They even shot children, so it's a merciless war with them. People said so. The Koreans were daredevil and over-confident. They fired a lot.

4. A prisoner, who had regrouped from North Vietnam, who was a member of the Labor Youth and served as a squad leader in a Local Force company which was just in the process of being formed in Phu My District, expressed this opinion regarding the Koreans:

I, myself, hate the Koreans. I heard the villagers say that the Korean troops killed innocent people, burned down their homes, and raped the women when they went on an operation at Vinh Thanh.

5. A rallier who had regrouped from North Vietnam, who was a Party official, and who held the rank of Lieutenant and the function of Company Assistant Political Officer in the 4th Co. of the Provincial E23 Battalion, compared the Koreans with the Americans:

I never encountered the Korean forces, but the infantry did. My comrades who had encountered them said they were braver than the Americans and kept on moving forward

in spite of our heavy fire and their casualties. That was in the first encounters with our forces. Later on, ~~they didn't rush against our fire any longer, but used~~ reinforcements and artillery to deal with us. In general, their encircling and intervention tactics were better than the American. So the Koreans' fighting abilities were higher than the Americans'. But the people were resentful against them because they were more cruel than the Americans. In operations, when asked by the children and old people not to damage their crops, the Americans often agreed and had their tanks or armored cars turned aside. It wasn't the same with the Koreans, and those who weren't out of the way ran the risk of being killed by them. The Koreans didn't distinguish the Communists from the people, and in the so-called Communist areas, they killed at random. The Koreans also raped.

This same subject also compared the Koreans with the ARVN troops and tactics. In addition, he discussed the effect ROK operations have on the movement of villagers away from their homes:

The people worried a lot when they heard about the Koreans' being stationed in our area. The ARVN in operations didn't loot and burn houses. For instance, once the ARVN came to Cat Khanh Village and didn't cause any damage to the people. The people heard that, in other places, the Koreans killed people, burned houses and took the population away indiscriminately, not like the ARVN. The people said that they could stay home and talk with the ARVN in operations, but it wouldn't be the same with the Koreans. Whenever they learned -- through the allies' leaflets or the rumors -- that the Koreans would operate in their village area, they would have to leave their village for elsewhere because the Koreans would kill them for having given shelter to the Communists.

6. A prisoner, who was a Regroupee from North Vietnam and a Party Member, and who was serving as a Platoon Leader and Guerrilla Instructor for a Local Force unit in Tuy Phuoc District, also mentioned the effect the possible presence of ROK troops have on the movement of villagers away from their homes:

I don't know how many villagers were left in the village after the recent Nationalist operation. The ~~people moved out with the troops.~~ They heard the Korean troops were coming and were seized with fright.They had heard that the Korean troops were extremely cruel. In Phuoc Hoa, they killed an entire hamlet, and only five people escaped.

7. A rallier, who served as a Village Party Secretary to Nhon Phong Village in An Nhon District, mentioned one incident involving Korean troops and civilian villagers:

After they fought with the VC, the Korean troops, if they lost some soldiers, would ... (pause)... was this their policy, or was it the cruelty of the Korean army? I wonder ...(pause)...they would bring out a large number of villagers and kill them. For example, in Kinh Tai Hamlet the Koreans shot about 27 people, including old people, young women, children and pregnant women. The Koreans put them into a house and threw grenades inside. The house caught fire and burned all 27 people.

This same Village Party Secretary also described some villager reactions to Korean operations and the methods used by the local VC authorities to overcome the resulting doubts and insecurity among the people and the VC.

After the Korean sweep operations, the people spread the word that there were many Korean troops and that they were strong. They used guerrilla tactics that could beat the VC tactics. That's why the VC can't defeat them and have to run away. The people became very confused and talked each other into moving to the GVN area to find security.

After the Korean sweep operations, the VC policy changed. The blow by the Koreans left most of the people burned out of their homes. There were only a few cadres left. The people's morale suffered and they hesitated to sacrifice any more. After that, there were reeducation meetings to strengthen the morale of the cadres, the army, the guerrillas, and the people. For example, after the GVN operation on

March 2, 1966, there was a large meeting called the (/
"Historical Reeducation Meeting". The September 17,
1955 appeal of Ho Chi Minh was brought out and
studied by the cadres. The study periods were
sponsored by the district.