

File 114

Mr. Howard W. Hoyt

5 December 1956

Jack E. Ryan

Brief Resume of Country Team Meeting Held December 4, 1956,  
at the United States Embassy in Saigon.

The following consists of a brief resume of the recollections of the writer of the Country Team Meeting held at 10:45 A.M., Tuesday, December 4th, 1956, in the Office of the Ambassador, Mr. G. Frederick Reinhardt, at the United States Embassy in Saigon:

This meeting was attended by the following individuals:

Ambassador Reinhardt, Mr. Barrows, Mr. Haraldson, General Williams, Colonel Finn, Mr. Anderton, Colonel Lansdale, Mr. Speer, Mr. McKesson, Mr. Anderson, Dr. Fishel, yourself, and the writer. It is to be noted that there were also two or three other individuals whose identity is unknown to the writer.

After very brief introductory remarks by Dr. Fishel, you will recall that you presented a detailed account of the MSU Police Administration Program in Viet Nam, in its relation to the Vietnamese Government, from the inception of this Program in 1955 until the present time. You cited the fact that MSU's thinking in terms of the needs of civilian police forces in Viet Nam was presented during several meetings held with former Minister of Interior, Mr. BUI-VAN-THINH, as well as with President Diem. During the course of these meetings held during the latter half of 1955, and in early 1956, these Vietnamese officials agreed in general with the proposals advanced by yourself and Dr. Weidner. You recall that Ambassador Reinhardt also agreed that he had, himself, discussed and presented to President Diem the proposed thinking of the MSU Police Team, in connection with suggested reorganization of civil law enforcement in Viet Nam.

You, also, advised the Country Team that in July of 1956, a meeting was held with Mr. CHAU, the Acting Minister of Interior of the Vietnamese Government, in connection with the proposed reorganization of civilian law enforcement in this country. At that time, Mr. CHAU appointed a committee which he agreed to head at the outset, for the purpose of studying the MSU proposals. Shortly thereafter, copies of the MSU overall civil police reorganization plan and copies of the suggested reorganization of the VBI were forwarded to the Palace for Mr. CHAU's attention. You pointed out to the Country Team that as of December 4, 1956, no meeting of this Committee has actually been held.

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You declared that in spite of original agreement by President Diem and two Ministers of Interior, the reorganization plans have not been implemented; that the Civil Guard has been increased in number; that no Central Identification Division has been created within the VBI; that no decision has been reached as to what exactly should be done in regards to a Central Crime Laboratory; that the Gendarmerie, instead of being incorporated either in a civil law enforcement organization or in the Army as a Military Police Battalion, has been increased in number from approximately 700 men in 1955, to some 1,300 in 1956. In addition, the President issued a decree on October 24, 1956, in which virtually complete control of all law enforcement, whether local or national, has been returned to the hands of each individual Province Chief. This action, as you pointed out, is in direct opposition to the thinking embodied in the overall reorganization plan of April 1956. You asserted that instead of progressing in terms of reorganization, the Vietnamese Government is going in reverse.

For a few minutes, you discussed the current situation with regard to the Civil Guard, in which you pointed out the number of Civil Guard which existed in 1955 - then you briefly related the changes in personnel which have occurred since that time. You explained to the Country Team that at one point the number of Civil Guard personnel dropped to some 45,000, but that during the past several months, this figure has increased so that we are now at a point where the personnel of this organization totals approximately 54,000. Again, this indicates that the Vietnamese Government has not accepted our thinking in limiting the number of people in this agency. The efficiency of General OAI, the Civil Guard Director, was pointed out; which opinion was supported by General Williams.

A comparison was made between General OAI and General LE, in terms of leadership qualities. Dr. Fishel pointed out that General LE had fallen into disfavor with the President by virtue of the fact that, according to the President, General LE had failed to remove from VBI Headquarters a number of young military officers who the President (according to Dr. Fishel) described as being "unsavory characters". Dr. Fishel declared that President Diem also disapproved of General LE on the latter's reported fondness for women, in spite of the fact that the General is married. Dr. Fishel stated that during the course of a meeting which he had the occasion of having with the President immediately prior to the Country Team Meeting, that the latter disclosed his having appointed one Mr. VU-THINH-HUAN (?) as Assistant to Mr. CHAU, in charge of internal security. He, also, declared that the President intended to make a decision with respect to General LE's replacement within the following 2 or 3 days.

During the course of the meeting, General Williams expressed a strong interest in the MSU position with regard to the Gendarmerie. He stated that had he known what the MSU stand on this organization was some 6 months ago, that he would have taken necessary steps so that a final disposition would

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have been made with regard to this organization. He declared he was most happy indeed to learn that another American group in Saigon agreed with his thinking as to the final disposition of this agency. At this point, Colonel Finn related the early American recommendations regarding this group. He stated that the Gendarmerie is carried with the Vietnamese Army Tables of Organization, and that they are included in the Defense Department payroll.

It is to be noted, that during your briefing of the existing situations, viz., the civil police agencies in Viet Nam, the large organization chart, showing our suggested reorganization was being passed among the members of the Country Team. A brief discussion was held, in which several members of the Country Team expressed their opinions with regard to the impact of the Presidential Decree of October 24, 1956. You pointed out that it was our opinion, based upon information received from the field, as well as from Saigon (Rogers' trip to My Tho; interview of General Le and Tran-Ba-Thanh), which indicated that the Province Chiefs are interpreting this decree to the effect that they now have full control over all civil law enforcement agencies which operate within their provinces. According to Dr. Fishel, this is a misinterpretation on the part of the Province Chiefs and that President Diem is aware of this misinterpretation. Dr. Fishel pointed out that other parts of this decree were very ambiguous and poorly worded, and that this has been called to President Diem's attention. You will recall that the Province Chiefs now have complete control over administrative, as well as operation, functions of all police organizations in their respective province. This control even goes to the point of permitting the Province Chief to release, according to his whim or desire, any individuals arrested by any of the police organizations in his province. It is believed that the Province Chief also now has authority to have arrested those persons whom he designates. As a result of this particular decree, it is now impossible for the heads of civil law enforcement agencies to transfer or promote any people within their organizations without first having the approval of the Province Chief involved.

Mr. Speer discussed his experiences regarding the Korean National Police relations with the Korean Provincial Governors following the recent war in that country.

Mr. Barrows declared that he was in sympathy with your concern over the obvious failure of the Vietnamese Government to implement the reorganization plans, which said Government had approved as far back as October 1955 (?). Mr. Barrows reiterated your worry over the fact that with one million dollars of American Aid already enroute, or about to be shipped to Viet Nam, and

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with some 5 to 6 million dollars of American Aid being considered for future shipment to this country, that failure to put into effect an efficient organizational structure would greatly increase the possibility of misuse and improper maintenance of this equipment.

Ambassador Reinhardt pointed out that he had come away from this particular Country Team Meeting with two salient observations:

- 1) That the Police Advisory Team is being blocked from making its fullest contribution by officials in the top levels of the Vietnamese Government.
- 2) In spite of the lack of implementation of reorganization plans on the part of high-ranking Vietnamese Government officials, that the MSU Police Advisory Team is making progress at the lower levels of various police echelons.

Ambassador Reinhardt suggested that the Country Team should wait a few days before deciding what action should be taken, in order to give President Diem additional time in which to make personnel changes in the top levels of the police organizations, as previously described by Dr. Fishel.

In the event of any future meetings of this type, the writer intends to take detailed notes during the course of said meetings.

JER/mmd

JACK E. RYAN, Deputy Chief  
Police Program Division