

PHABC-689

ASN = 61439

DEBRIEF OF A
CORDS MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT
(ADMINISTRATION)
SAIGON, VIETNAM
1967 - 1968
No. 23682

PRÉCIS

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This retired Foreign Service Officer has had long and varied experience with organization, methods and systems problems with the State Department in overseas areas. He has a full understanding of the difficulties encountered in the consolidation of management control involving diversified operations.

He makes the following significant observations:

- A. The CORDS organization was a "crash" project that proceeded directly from concept to process without the detailed planning and programming that is required for a major reorganizational effort.
- B. There is nothing wrong with the concept of CORDS. It can be made to work as an interim organization; however, the internal administrative procedures of the military and civilian establishments should not, and cannot, be fused.
- C. The military and civilian operations should be separate and intact with overall direction and coordination emanating from the joint headquarters, CORDS.
- D. In order for CORDS to work properly, all agencies concerned should transfer an appropriate share of its funds, facilities and manpower to an authorized, mandated organization called CORDS.
- E. The biggest problem in initiating the CORDS organization developed from a general statement in the agreement that formed CORDS which stated that for the time being each agency would support its own people. MACV couldn't support its Civil Operations

people under the CORDS concept because the military advisors (MAAG) received their support from the Vietnamese Army (ARVN) and had no internal resources to pursue the CORDS mission. The fact that the military had to be supported out of civilian resources created a great deal of rancor and no small amount of book-keeping and accounting problems.

- F. While not now possible, every Senior Province Representative should be a civilian. The pacification program can't be effectively carried out as a military operation. The Vietnamese do not trust military people.
- G. Congress and the General Accounting Office (GAO) must recognize and understand that abnormal conditions require unusual operations.
- H. The Region is largely autonomous and they've gone too far in that direction--they are too large and should be reduced in size. People assigned, by Saigon to Region, are sidetracked by Region officials and are sometimes malassigned. This can be controlled at top level.
- I. The need for language training is indispensable if you are going to work outside of Saigon.
- J. ATC is a good school and is doing a good job. A setup like ATC is far superior to the training at FSI in Washington. The training in Washington is good general indoctrination into the service, but it's mass production. Ideally, training should be done as near the post as possible, but it will never work at the post because of the pressures to get the man on the job.

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PREFACE

The material contained in this debrief represents the personal observations, experiences, attitudes and opinions of the party interviewed. The Asia Training Center (ATC), the University of Hawaii, the Agency for International Development (AID), and the United States Government in no way approve or disapprove of the actions reported or opinions expressed; nor are the facts or situations reported verified.

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1. To obtain general information which will be of value to overseas trainees in their intended assignment.
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3. To provide material for understanding the social and cultural framework of a country, and its particular and peculiar dynamics of social change. And, as a correlate, to discover customs, mores, taboos, and other relevant factors which affect interpersonal relationships between Americans and members of a host community.
4. To accumulate a bank of new or updated information for an institutional memory, for fundamental research and for application to future development assistance programs.
5. To record information which may not have been made a part of official reports on the functions, roles, frustrations, complaints, successes and failures of AID Field Operations Personnel.
6. To provide other information suitable for instructional purposes. For example, to identify problem situations of sufficient complexity and significance to construct case studies for use in ATC problem-solving exercises.

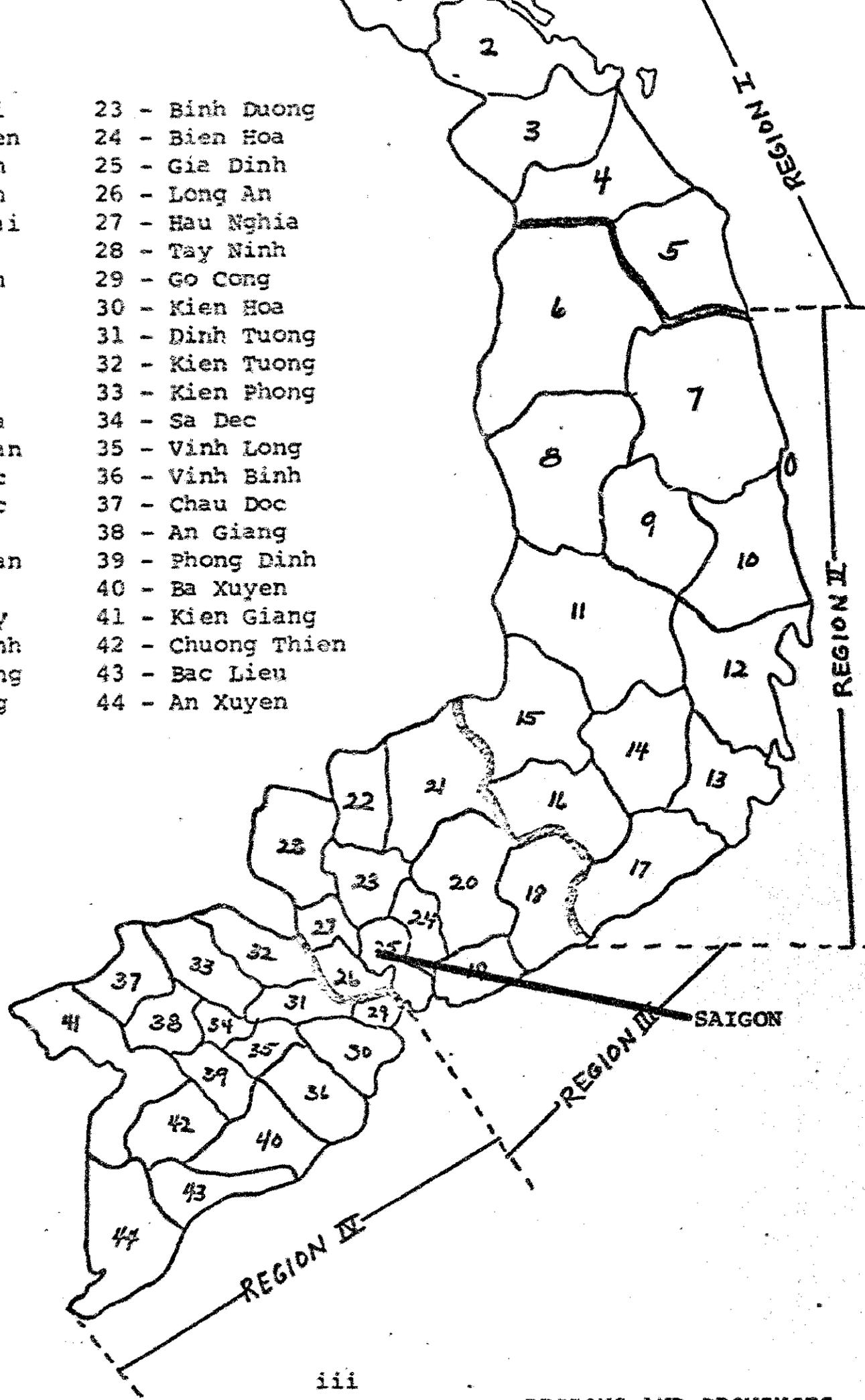
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| 1 - Quang Tri | 23 - Binh Duong |
| 2 - Thua Thien | 24 - Bien Hoa |
| 3 - Quang Nam | 25 - Gia Dinh |
| 4 - Quang Tin | 26 - Long An |
| 5 - Quang Ngai | 27 - Hau Nghia |
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| 8 - Pleiku | 30 - Kien Hoa |
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Preparation and Orientation for Position

I am a retired Foreign Service Officer and have spent seventeen years overseas with the State Department. I have been in Vietnam on two other occasions as a Foreign Service Officer. I joined AID to serve in Vietnam with OCO just at the time it was being reorganized into CORDS. I was told in Washington that as the CORDS organization had just begun, I would probably be better off without any orientation. Washington didn't know just how this new organization was going to be set up and organized--they had very little information about it. Because I have had a lot of work experience with the operation of consolidated overseas administrative programs, they felt that perhaps I could be of some assistance in helping with the new organization. I arrived in Vietnam just about the time CORDS was getting started as an organization.

Opinion Regarding CORDS

I went out to Vietnam with an open mind as to what I was going to find. When I first heard the details about CORDS I was horrified over the thought of consolidating military with civilian operations. In the Embassies where I've worked for a good many years, I have found that it is very difficult to consolidate a military procedure with a civilian procedure. When I got out there I found that this was exactly the situation. The State Department has been working on the theory of consolidation of administrative work for all civilian operations for years. Even as far back as 1950 they were thinking in terms of consolidating administrative work and eliminating separate administrative setups in each of the agencies in the Embassies. I'm firmly convinced that this is the future of overseas operations. It eliminates a great deal of unnecessary work, can eliminate extra bodies; and a uniformity of administrative operation within each post can be developed.

President Kennedy--I think in a letter from the White House dated April 29, 1961--stated that the Ambassador will be the "boss" at each post. Based on that, the State Department

tried to enlarge on the joint administrative/support concept. When I arrived in Vietnam, I found that basically that is what they were attempting to do in connection with the establishment of CORDS. It was an attempt to consolidate the total operation under one head instead of having each of the American agencies fighting each other. Thus, in theory at least, you have a more efficient operation; it should be more economical, and in the long run more effective.

I found that the subject of CORDS was just about as controversial as the Vietnam war. People had very strong ideas about whether CORDS could be workable or not. I heard a lot of criticism about the fact that, under Ambassador Porter, OCO was just getting started and that it was a good operation. Then all of a sudden, I think in May, 1967, when the President met with General Westmoreland and other high officials, it was decided that OCO would be eliminated and CORDS would be established with the idea that there would be an over-all plan of consolidation which would include all civilian and military agencies out there. I think within each individual that works for a particular agency, for any period of time, a feeling of loyalty develops to that operation. He resents giving up authority or losing the identity of being connected with that particular operation. The old-line AID people have an intense loyalty to the operation and they resented turning over their authority to an outside agency. It was very difficult to get USIA to merge their operation into any setup where they would lose their identity, so to speak. It was almost impossible to get CIA into a master organization such as OCO. Then, on top of all those difficulties, to try to get the military operation thrown into the kettle to make up CORDS was a monumental task.

I have a number of specific instances that I might mention that, I think, might illustrate some of the difficulties that were involved in the early stages of CORDS. I will confine my remarks to the administrative side, I don't want to get into the program side. In CORDS we had, in addition to the Management Support Division (MSD), a number of the programs--Public Health, Refugee, Public Safety, Psy-Ops, New Life Development. Each of those operations were broken-down into two categories--administrative operations and line operations. To me, administrative operation is non-productive work. It's terribly necessary, but administration, as such, does not produce anything--it supports the people who produce the finished product. We have to keep in mind that we have this split all through the whole organization. So let's just talk now about the administrative setup--the mechanics of it--the managerial, not the actual line operations.

In order to set up an organization of this kind the first thing we had to do was to get the proper organizational charts set up to establish lines of authority. CORDS, as such, is an organization in name only. It has no assets of its own; it has no authority; it can't buy or sell anything. Everything we did out there in the administrative operation of CORDS was done through some agency. For example, all of the materials that came out there came from one of the agencies--USIA had their procurement lines of authority and they brought their material in; AID, of course, the giant on the civilian side, had their own lines of authority and brought their material in. CIA also had their own lines of authority, as did the Department of Agriculture. Then, on top of that, we superimposed CORDS. This meant, in effect, that CORDS had to work through these agencies.

One of the first problems we faced was trying to establish the lines of authority of the administrative operations of CORDS. In order to do that, we had to work out procedures so that there would be no overlap in the work that was to be done. We finally worked it out to where requisitions, for example, would come in to the Management Support Division of CORDS, (MSD) and would be screened there. Under MSD we had communications, which is one of the most important aspects of CORDS. In this area we were attempting to set up a complete network of communications between Saigon through the regions and down into each of the provinces. When I left there, we had teletype operations into approximately 30 provinces. Since that time it's gone up to 38 and they hope this year to have communication lines into the other six--this would give complete communications into all 44 provinces. In addition, we had radio communications covering the country. This operation was headed up by a large staff under MSD.

The 30 million dollar Air America contract was also administered by MSD. We had one section of MSD called AirOps that laid down the ground rules and administered the operation for Air America for CORDS. This service was for CORDS--across the board--which included military (MACV), and the civilian agencies in CORDS. There again, however the contracts--the actual work--and the expenditures involved in getting material for each of these projects were done by the separate agencies--not by CORDS. We only administered.

We also had a personnel setup which caused a lot of trouble because in the early days AID had the responsibility for all personnel work for their people. We finally managed

to get a personnel office going and, when I left there, it was on its way but still had a long way to go. What we wanted to do was to draw more and more of the personnel functions away from AID and handle them across the board in CORDS as a unit, rather than have AID do all the personnel work for AID people, USIA for USIA people, and on down the line. Of course we immediately ran into the problem of merging with the military.

Then we had a General Service Operation, which is another part of MSD. This provided material and administrative support for the Saigon area and the Regional Offices. CORDS also managed a records and files section, which was a joint venture, but was not on its feet when I left--it was still operating under the handicap of decentralization. We hadn't yet reached the place where we could draw in all the files for CORDS--they were still scattered all around the place. In addition, a motor vehicle operation was part of the MSD set-up, which was handled largely by AID but the overall authority of assigning vehicles to the posts, to the provinces, and to the field was the responsibility of MSD. This covers the major operations that we had in the Management Support Division. So there you have MSD--the administrative nucleus of the CORDS operation. Again, CORDS, since it owned nothing, had no property, and no actual authority to make any procurement or any commitments at all, had to go through the other agencies. That, to me, was the great problem that existed at that time, and will exist, I'm afraid, until there is a completely revised and refined procedure set up to cover this monumental endeavor.

Let's go back a little bit now to the formation of CORDS--maybe I can connect some of these things together. When CORDS was created, it was a crash project. There were no procedures set up at all to guide the operation. In other words, the determination was made that CORDS would be created. After that determination it was taken for granted that resources would come and procedures would be set up. There was no advance planning. It was believed that we were winning the fighting war but were losing the pacification program. You would read and hear that there was no point in winning a military war if we are going to lose the civilian support. Pacification at that time was handled by OCO under the guidance of Ambassador Porter. No one would argue that pacification can ever succeed without sufficient military security. The security aspect of the pacification program is of such importance that it would fall flat on its face in the absence of proper protection. We can't send civilians out to the provinces; we can't do any building; we can't do anything until there is military security.

In other words, the pacification people have to go in behind the military people. In the absence of a military victory, there can be no pacification program. President Johnson and his advisors apparently felt that the pacification program was not going at the pace he wanted it to go. Apparently some of the President's advisors prevailed upon him to adopt the theory that if we could have one overall organization to handle both the military and the pacification, the security aspect of the pacification program would be given more impetus; there would be a giant pooling of manpower, and that we would do away with the two-headed operation of the military on one side and the civilian on the other. So orders were issued that Ambassador Porter's operation was to be eliminated, as such, and be transferred to a high-level civilian who would share the responsibility of pacification with General Westmoreland.

General Westmoreland and Ambassador Komer were given the responsibility for developing an effective pacification program. On the MACV organization plan you'll find Westmoreland's name appearing in two places--at the top, where he has overall authority of the fighting war; down lower on the chart you will find that he also has direct authority for the pacification program. That, in effect, merged civilian and military operations under one head. Ambassador Komer then was the deputy to General Westmoreland in charge of the actual operation of CORDS, which involved both military and civilian. It is a most unique situation and a complicated setup. You have General Westmoreland in charge of the whole thing and then you have General Westmoreland and Ambassador Komer in charge of the organization known as CORDS. So, the pacification was actually put under General Westmoreland, but to remove the stigma of having a pacification program entirely under the military, it was arranged in such a way as to appear that Ambassador Komer was actually put in charge of all pacification but if you look carefully you'll find that General Westmoreland is actually above Ambassador Komer. That's the situation as it exists now.

As I said, CORDS was put into effect without any preliminary planning and no procedures were worked out, so they had to start from scratch as soon as it was announced that CORDS was going to be created. The name itself created a lot of eyebrow raising and snide remarks--"CORDS--what do you mean by CORDS?" It was quite obvious to us that it was a name created to indicate that here was an operation intended to tie in and consolidate a number of functions--"CORDS." The acronym actually means Civil Operations of Revolutionary Development Support. The "Civil Operations" was understandable, but when it came to

the "Revolutionary Development", that was something that a lot of people just didn't like. I personally don't know why, but they insist on calling it Revolutionary Development. When you're working in Saigon and you have nothing else to talk about in the evening after dinner--especially after a couple of cocktails in the officers' club--you're bound to gravitate to a discussion of academic problems, such as whoever thought of the name CORDS. It's one of the things that makes conversation.

The organization of CORDS since it began with a directive from the President was in very general terms. To illustrate the generality of the agreement, which formed CORDS, there is a paragraph that says "for the time being" each agency shall support its own people; they shall provide their respective personnel with vehicles, housing, etc. This "for the time being" clause was bad because it indicated clearly that it was just a transitional move--that something else was going to come. Bear in mind, now, that this was a top-level agreement, approved by each of the agencies under considerable pressure, that says "for the time being" these agencies shall support their own people. That means that the military would provide all the vehicles, typewriters, paper, pencils, etc., that each military man would use when he was doing work for CORDS. It meant that every AID employee would be provided the material that he needed to work with from AID; it meant that every USIA man or officer would be provided paper, pencils, cars and everything that he would need from his own parent agency.

Now, in making my trips around the country, I visited some 23 provinces--I'd say, "How's your motor vehicle situation?" The civilian AID man in charge would say, "Fine as far as our civilian requirements are concerned." We just received more Scout cars and everything's fine, but I'm short of cars for my military counterparts." I'd say, "Isn't the military providing any cars to their own people?" He'd say, "No; they haven't gotten any." Out of some 23 provinces that I visited I found only one or two cases where any automobiles had been provided at all to the military people who were assigned to CORDS. Even in cases where there was a military man in charge of the province, he was not provided with a car from the military. Further, I found that, from the military aspect, the vehicles would have to be provided to the provinces by ARVN, not by MACV. That goes back to the old MAAG, which meant that the cars would be given by USARV (U.S. Army, Vietnam) to ARVN, and ARVN in turn would make the cars available, in theory, to the military

people who were assigned to the Provinces to work with CORDS. Since no cars were available from ARVN, I said, "We'll just have to forget about the agreement. It doesn't matter whether a man is wearing a military uniform or a civilian suit; he's got to have wheels. He can't get along without them." We would try to work it out so as to give each province enough vehicles to take care of their needs, regardless of whether they were military or civilian. When the AID people in Saigon found out about this, they really hit the ceiling. It got so bad there at one time that orders went out from AID/Saigon that "Until all AID vehicles assigned to the military are returned, CORDS will not get any more vehicles." Under this order, we would have had to take all the cars away from the military people, both in Saigon and in the field, in order to appease the AID people in Saigon before we could get more cars. It really got quite bad. We got around it later by assigning the cars to an organization--we would assign x number of vehicles to each division, not to individuals--the individuals in each program would use the car that had been assigned to the unit, rather than having them assigned to the individual. That merely illustrates one of the problems there--it went all down the line. Typewriters, desks, chairs, paper and pencils--none of those things were provided to the military people by the military. AID, USA or a civilian operation had to provide the things that the military should have provided.

There were a number of reasons for this. The setup of the military is basically to fight a war, not to handle the pacification work--which is understandable. They were not administratively geared to support the pacification effort properly. They ran up against the problem where they had to go to ARVN in order to get the materials needed. AID, on the other hand, had a tremendously effective supply system in Saigon. I have nothing but admiration for the AID program there. They received material by the tons, worth millions of dollars. They were in the process of building large warehouses when I was there and I understand that the work has been completed. AID had a system where a requisition would come in, be checked, filled and on the way in a very short time. We would receive word from AID saying that they had 500 Scouts coming in and would ask how we wanted them distributed. We would work it out with regions--so many to each region, and they would be sent out immediately. It was a case where AID had the facilities and the means of getting the material, but the military did not. So, a good 90 per cent of the material used in CORDS, by CORDS personnel was provided by civilian agencies.

Now, to carry this further, I assisted in making the move when CORDS was transferred from Saigon to the "Little Pentagon" at Tan Son Nhut. We assumed that the military was going to provide furniture for Ambassador Komer and Wade Latham and all of the elements of CORDS that were going to be placed in the new building. A short time before the move was actually made, I was told, much to my surprise, that the military just didn't have the desks, chairs, cabinets, etc., and that AID would have to provide them. The AID people fought it tooth and toenail and were very unhappy about the fact that their desks and chairs were going to be placed out in a military compound. We finally worked it out by assuring AID that we would inventory every single item that was sent to the MACV compound and that as soon as the military got their material in, AID would get their desks back or else a trade would be made. We moved truckloads of desks, chairs, file cabinets, typewriters--all the material that had been used in the old building out to the new compound. So all the material that was being used by CORDS at the military compound belongs to AID, not to the military. It's difficult to answer your question as to why this is--I don't know why. They say that they just didn't have the equipment, hadn't ordered it, and hadn't planned on it. So, when the chips were down and we had to have furniture, AID had to provide it.

The AID people were greatly concerned about the criticism that would come from Congress about the lack of records and inventories, but it was an impossibility under such circumstances to maintain the type of records that were needed. We talked about conducting an inventory. It was agreed that it was just impossible to conduct an inventory unless you could stop the war. To conduct an inventory you've got to have cut-off dates and make your counts and reconcile your figures with your shipping documents, etc. It was impossible to do that so I do hope that Congress will realize what great handicaps AID, and all the civilian agencies, operated under and that it was just impossible to maintain proper inventories. If you're going to get the job done, you have to take short-cuts; you have to make material available to the people you deal with; and you have to worry about the accountability later on.

The talk about all the corruption that was going on out there in Saigon. I personally saw very little of it and certainly not among the Americans. It was just the idea that you had to get a job done and you did the best you could. You just shut your eyes and did your work without worrying whether you were using a typewriter that belonged to one agency or another or whether the car belonged to the military or civilian.

But, from the accountability standpoint and trying to work out budgets, it's very, very difficult.

Now I'd like to get into another, but related, aspect of CORDS. One of the more widely discussed aspects of this whole organization is how can a procedure be worked out whereby you can have the assets of a number of different agencies all thrown together with the intent of carrying out one specific purpose. From an organizational standpoint, to me it was just almost an impossibility under the present setup. As I said before, here was an operation called CORDS with no real authority, no assets of its own--it's a beggar. It has to beg, in effect, for everything. Each government agency--USIA, AID, Department of Agriculture, etc.--has to submit separate budgets to Congress. The money then is given to that particular agency and that agency has a direct responsibility for the proper expenditure of that money. Everything that's purchased from funds provided an individual agency must be accounted for. According to the present budget concept and GAO decisions and regulations an agency official does not have the authority to give away the assets of his organization. AID, as an example, in carrying out its budget responsibility must be accountable for the proper utilization of the equipment and supplies that are purchased from the funds that Congress gives it. USIA also must do that. If those agencies turn over assets to any other operation, the owing agency loses accountability. USIA, in particular, was very reluctant to give CORDS authority to use its equipment. AID, even though they made equipment available to CORDS, kept the best records they could as to where it went. It was assumed that somebody, someday would have to be accountable for all the property. So, from an administrative standpoint, it's a very difficult problem.

The same thing applies to people. How far can an agency go in hiring people and then loaning them to an intangible operation called CORDS? Who is responsible in the long run for that individual? Can AID and USIA and all the others just turn their people to CORDS, and relieve themselves of all responsibility for that individual? Those were the kind of questions that were constantly brought before us. Now in the various Embassies throughout the world that problem has been faced a number of times. But, it's been faced under peacetime conditions where one had an opportunity to work out agreements, responsibility and accountability. But in setting up CORDS, there were no such agreements worked out, and it was obviously impossible to work them out under the circumstances. That's

why, I think, there's probably been a great deal of criticism aimed at CORDS. I've heard people criticize CORDS from one end to the other. Those same people, incidentally, who are the most vociferous critics, seem to have never really thought out an alternate plan. When I talked with these people I'd say, "Well, I know CORDS is in a mess. What could you do to create an operation which would really be workable?" It was obvious that the people criticizing CORDS were thinking strictly in negative terms--not constructive. I wondered whether such criticism was based on reluctance to turn over authority to somebody else?

I have a few more examples that I'll throw in here. One problem I had was to work out a procedure which would cover the issuance of guns and ammunition--it sounds like a small project but it turned out to be quite a large project. Department of State, USIA and AID regulations provided that private guns could be in the possession of individuals, provided they were properly registered with the local government and care taken that they would not be used contrary to established rules and regulations. There was no provision for the issuance of official guns to those people. On the other hand, MACV had a very strong regulation which absolutely prohibited any individual from having a gun in his possession, other than an officially issued gun. You had one set of procedures issued by the military and another set of procedures issued by the civilian operation. In spite of the fact that I was trying to work out one procedure to cover CORDS, I couldn't do it because of the conflicting regulations. I ran right into a brick wall--neither would give--the military felt that they could not give on theirs and the civilian side felt that they could not give on theirs. I ran up against that kind of thing almost constantly

I had another case where I was given an assignment to work out a detailed procedure to cover the internal security for the protection of classified documents in CORDS. When we got together, we found that there were differences that were very difficult to work out. As an example, under military procedures, when you pass a secret document from one individual to another it has to have a classified cover sheet on it which had to be signed. On the civilian side, you don't have to do that. The Regional Security Officer of the State Department who handles security for AID and USIA and was working with CORDS, felt he could not yield to the extent of adopting the military regulations. The military felt that they could not yield to the extent of adopting the civilian regulations.

Finally I worked out a procedure after a number of changes, which I thought would accommodate both civilian and military requirements. The arrangement provided that when a secret document was prepared, the civilian regulations of the Regional Security Office would govern as long as it remained in the civilian hands. When the document was given to a military man, he would put a cover sheet on it, sign for it, and from that time on it would be a military document. That was the only compromise I could get. I finally worked this procedure up to the point where it was really two procedures in one and sent it up to Ambassador Komer. Ambassador Komer slapped it down with a very strong note written in longhand saying, "This is not what I want. I want a procedure which fully coordinates and consolidates the internal security operation as one set of regulations. I do not want two--one civilian and one military." So, it came back down and I had to start over again. When I left, it was still not accomplished. We just couldn't do it.

The military could not issue, under their regulations, a vehicle to anyone below the rank of colonel. In CORDS, lieutenant colonels were assigned as division chiefs. Under civilian regulation, a division chief is entitled to have a car assigned to him. But the military insists that if an officer is below the rank of colonel, they will not assign a car to him regardless of his assigned position. There are numerous instances of a direct conflict in the regulations between military and civilian. It's not too difficult to find a common denominator between the civilian organizations--it's been done in the embassies for a good many years. There are a great many common denominators in the administrative operations which are very similar. Each agency can give a little and take a little and still operate within the framework imposed on the chief of that particular government agency. But, under the military, that's not the case. It really surprised me to find how different they are from civilian agencies in their procedures. Many of their procedures and methods are superior, in my opinion, to the civilian. Their accountability, in many cases, is more effective than the civilians. On the other hand, I think there is a great waste of manpower in the military. Their procedures are based largely on the fact that they have plenty of manpower--which was demonstrated all down the line. They had enlisted men to do the typing, write memoranda, reports, etc., while we were fighting to get a stenographer. We had one stenographer for the whole of MSD. The military can overshadow civilian agencies

simply because they have almost unlimited manpower. I'd be called into a meeting to represent CORDS on some particular problem and when I arrived I would find that there would be four or five lieutenant colonels and colonels sitting around the room. The first thing I knew they had picked up the ball and run with it--a part of the project would be assigned to each officer. They'd say to me, "We'll have this worked up for you and we'll give you write-up." There isn't much you can do--you have to accept that. Sure enough, the memo would come to me, I would clear it, change it the way I'd want to and then they'd work on it. But it would come out as a MACV memo--in other words, they completely overshadowed us by the fact that they had more manpower.

The criticism of CORDS, I think, to a large extent is unjustified. I think that CORDS, as an operation, can be made to work but I think that a major change will have to be made in it. I think that the operation of CORDS will have to be basically a civilian operation; the procedures will have to be clearly delineated as being those applicable to a civilian operation. The military, on the other hand, will have to come in under a separate set of regulations. The correspondence system for the military and for the civilian is entirely different. Even the method for writing a memo in the military is radically different from that of a civilian operation. Trying to consolidate the two is like mixing oil and water. As I see it, the concept of CORDS operating as a unified head in carrying out the pacification program in Vietnam is the proper goal to strive for--not have the State Department, AID, USIA,--each agency setting up its own separate administrative operation. They should merge together under one head and give CORDS a clear mandate with authority. In effect, each agency would pool its assets, manpower, and funds, then assign and transfer those assets in a pool to the proper officials in CORDS. On the other side, allow the military as a partner to do what they're supposed to do. As I see it, it's almost impossible to merge together the civilian and military operations into one. The line of authority at the top shouldn't be difficult--you could still have the two sets of procedures, but let the civilians operate under civilian procedures and the military operate under the military procedures. I can, of course, see many difficulties.

When I left, CORDS had 450 positions vacant out of a 1,350 complement. As a result, we had many Prov Reps who were military people and, of course, many other positions had to be filled by military people simple because we did not have the civilian bodies out there to do it. When a military officer

is put in charge of a province, he immediately wants to operate under the military procedures. He's accustomed to military regulations and feels that they are the best. On the other hand, when that military officer passes on to another job and a civilian is put in the job, then his successor will want to operate under a civilian set of procedures. It seems to me that in having this "oil and water" problem to face, someone will have to make a decision before long that certain procedures will be followed. If time were available to work out a complete set of manuals, taking out certain aspects of the military procedures and certain aspects of the civilian procedures, that would be the ideal situation. But, as I see it, CORDS is a temporary operation and I don't think we would want to get into it that deep. At the same time, trying to operate under two sets of procedures makes it extremely difficult and almost unworkable. Still, I feel that the concept of CORDS is good. We've got to have unified control and unified operation and you're only going to get that by an operation such as OCO or CORDS.

To me, OCO and CORDS were very similar--the only difference really is that under CORDS the military was brought in as a integral part of the operation and the overall responsibility and command for the operation was a joint military and civilian control. Under OCO it was strictly a civilian operation--it was a cooperative venture with the military. There are certain parts of OCO that could be put into effect and there are certain aspects of CORDS that could be put into effect, a combination of the best features of each organization might be the answer.

The program work of CORDS, as I see it, was not seriously affected because, regardless of the administrative setup, each program had the responsibility for carrying out its own work. PSD (Public Safety Division) is an example; even though it was part of CORDS, it was still 100% AID. There was no change in their operation--the nature of their work continued the same way under CORDS as it did under AID. In the other operations, -- NLD, PsyOps, Refugee, Public Health, Chieu Hoi -- the program work itself was carried out by experts in their respective fields, but it was necessary for them to coordinate at the top and receive policy guidance. Once a policy was enunciated and the determination was made to go ahead into a certain field, then the experts in each program would carry it out. So I don't think the programs are seriously affected whether they're under CORDS or OCO.

The big problem in CORDS, therefore, is on the administrative, not the program side. You have these programs, very similar to the Air Force, the Navy and the Army, brought together under one head, the Department of Defense, but each with its individual way of doing things. I wouldn't be a bit surprised but that concept probably influenced the creation of an organization such as CORDS. General Westmoreland, Ambassador Komer, probably Ambassador Porter, Ambassador Bunker--all of them--probably had in the back of their minds something akin to the Department of Defense. In effect, you can see a similarity in the creation of CORDS with the Pentagon. In the Department of Defense, however, you're dealing entirely with the military--there was no attempt on the part of the military or the Pentagon to take over any part of General Services Administration or the State Department. In CORDS, however, they went a little bit too far. They created a Pentagon setup plus taking over the civilian operations. If we could still have the Pentagon concept, but have it limited to the civilian agencies, then have the military tied in at the top more or less in such way that the military people could still utilize their military procedures, I think that it would be an excellent, workable situation. A person might say that that is just what they had back in OCO, but it wasn't exactly, as I understand it. Under OCO it was not under a single head because the ambassador was in charge of OCO. The General, in a situation of this kind, is under the Ambassador only insofar as certain aspects of the military work is concerned. He is not under the Ambassador when it comes to fighting the war. So there was not the coordination at the top that was attempted under CORDS. In CORDS, in order to get the desired coordination, they actually put the pacification program under the military; but by dotted lines and other charting devices, the Ambassador also retained his authority right down into the CORDS operation.

As far as CORDS is concerned--as an organization--I think that there is a definite future for it. I don't know whether I've sounded too negative or too critical. I've criticized people for being so critical of CORDS because we've got to give it a chance to work. In the time I was there, I saw a tremendous improvement in the work we were doing. I think if we give CORDS an opportunity, it will do what it is supposed to do, centralize authority and create a unified command between the military and civilian agencies. The fact that I criticize it doesn't mean that I would be in favor of scrapping it--I wouldn't. I would be in favor of making changes

and refinements. Now we're trying, with what little history we have, to pick out the flaws in it and correct them. In discussing this with a number of my colleagues, as far as I can interpret their feelings, they are convinced that the mistake was trying to integrate the civilian and military procedures--the people aren't too much of a problem. If a person really wants to do a good job, he'll do it in spite of the procedures and the physical limitations. But when you tell a military man that he has to follow civilian procedures, or if you say to a civilian that he has to follow military procedures, you immediately encounter a tremendous problem. Even in handling the files and memoranda; writing a letter; following security regulations--there is a great deal of difference between military and civilian procedures and regulations. It seems to me that we could still accomplish the same thing by keeping the military operation intact and the civilian operation intact, but have them coordinated at the top. In other words, the military could be operated as a separate division of the operation rather than trying to merge them together.

I hope to have an opportunity to get back to Saigon. I want to go back. I like organizational work and this, to me poses a challenge to anyone. I'd like to have an opportunity to work on it some more, but with the recent trouble I don't know what's going to happen. I'm very discouraged right now--reading the papers and all. I'm afraid that much of the good work that was done by CORDS is going to have to be redone. That's a pity--we were just getting started.

Observations Regarding CORDS Field Operations

Operating procedures in the provinces were left largely to the Prov Reps. They were given briefings in Saigon and in each of the Regional Offices, but when they got down to the working province level, they were pretty well on their own. We had no operational uniformity. I think, when I left there, some 40 per cent of the provinces were headed up by military and about 60 per cent by civilians. If a military man was in charge, he had a civilian as his deputy; or if a civilian was in charge, he had a military man as his deputy. That meant that where the military man was in charge, the office followed the military pattern pretty well. Where the civilian was in charge, the civilian procedures were pretty

well followed. My visits to the field were for several purposes. One time I made trips around working on communications requirements for each of the offices. Again I went around to help set up impressed funds--petty cash funds, so to speak,-- and to set up an audit system. Since most of the funds for the provinces were AID funds, we attempted to use the AID procedures for safeguarding the records and funds. We would go out, sit down with the Prov Rep and explain just exactly what he'd have to do. How he'd have to have receipts to show for the money expended and how he'd have to make out a replenishment voucher and send it in periodically; then the money would come back to him. As individuals, all of them were extremely anxious to do the best they could, but you could see that a military officer immediately found himself burdened with a whole lot of paperwork that he resented very much--he didn't like that. A military man could be forced, of course, to carry out the AID procedures; if he didn't, he didn't get any money. But he didn't like it. Since there were no clearly defined lines of authority down to his office, each Prov Rep would set up his own procedures. Now, to a certain extent that's necessary, but we all agreed that there should be general guidelines for the manner in which each province advisory team would operate.

We started out sometime ago to try to set up uniform organizational patterns. We had the organizational pattern completed for Saigon. Then I worked in each of the four regions and we developed organizational charts for the Regions. But there were no organizational charts developed for the province level. We finally devised an organizational chart establishing a senior Prov Rep and a deputy (actually the assistant for the plans and operations). We had all the administrative operation set up as part of the advisory teams. Then there would be, ultimately, representatives of Chieu Hoi, Public Health, Refugee, PsyOps, RDC, PSD, NLD and maybe even military intelligence people there. From there we planned to go down to the district and hamlet level. Parts of the organizational charts have been completed but not implemented--largely due to the lack of manpower and lack of time to work out the agreements and basic principles.

The people assigned to the provinces have taken an awful beating. I just can't praise the workers in the province enough. A raid took place when I visited the northern province of Quang Tri. Every week or so there would be actual fighting

right there along the river in Quang Tri. The people waded around in the mud rebuilding their houses even though they were under constant pressure. It's really amazing how they were able to keep their morale up, stay there and continue carrying out their work. It's so different from Saigon and even the regions, where there is relatively nice housing to live in and nice offices to work in. The success of CORDS is not going to be measured by what happens in Saigon, or even what happens in Regions--it's what happens in the provinces, villages, and hamlets that counts. So we've got to give flexibility to the Senior Prov Rep; we've got to let him work up procedures and programs which will fit his particular and unique situation. But, at the same time, we've got to give him enough guidance and direction so that there will be at least some similarity in the provinces. This is particularly necessary in attempting to work up plans and budgets. Even though the Prov Reps resent it when they're asked to give an idea of what they'll need in the next six months or next year, how many vehicles, how many for replacement and how many new vehicles, how many typewriters, how much paper and pencils, they'd say "We've got too much work to do, we can't sit down and do that. How do we know what's going to happen a year from now?" That's a good question, but the lead time on supplies going out there can run as high as six to nine months for vehicles and some of the larger items. Somebody, somewhere along the line has to sit down and give an estimate in order to get the pipeline started. Then you've got to keep this material coming in on that pipeline. If the provinces can't, or won't, supply the home office of CORDS, AID--and the other agencies--can only estimate their needs. Unfortunately, that's what we had to do in a lot of cases.¹ Now, in the MSD of CORDS we did have a small logistic setup but we were never able to man it as it should have been. It had two people in it at the most--one civilian and one military. That section was supposed to be able to project, from six months to three years ahead, all the basic supplies and equipment that would be needed so they could get in the pipeline and get out. We've got to get more people out there--people that are dedicated to the extent that they recognize that they're going to have to sit down and do paperwork to project their needs even though it is a chore to them. They'll have to use a crystal ball--if they don't, somebody will have to.

¹Editor's Note: See Debrief Report No. 15681, topic heading Planning Problems and Logistics, pages 24-26.

Otherwise, the first thing you know they're out of cars and all the supplies they need; and then they put their order in to the headquarters and find that the warehouses are empty. On problems of that nature, the information must come from the provinces--either from the provinces or someone has to second-guess them.

I think (and the people I've talked with are in complete agreement) that there should be no military man assigned to the position of senior prov rep. The province work should be performed by civilians. By this I mean that it should be headed up by a civilian. The reason we have the military people in charge of these provinces is simply because we did not have the civilians. When you don't have the civilians to fill the jobs, you have to put somebody in there. The military people that are in there are more or less on a stopgap basis. I think the local people resent the fact that a military person is in charge of the pacification program. The Vietnamese people, I think, have learned over the years to more or less distrust a military man. I had some good friends there--local people--and some of them told me that they were glad that I wasn't a military man because they were afraid of the military people and they don't understand them. That seems to be their general attitude. I think, personally, that it would be a great mistake if we put the Prov Reps in such a position where they would carry out the work along the lines of the military. Where there is a military man in charge of an operation, he naturally follows a military procedure--to him, they are the best. His office is usually set up along military lines; his civilian assistants are strictly there on sufferance--he's there to carry out the wishes of the military man. It is planned ultimately to have a civilian in charge of the prov rep and have the military man be the deputy. That was more or less the standard pattern, but I think that is a mistake. I think that the military are necessary in there--basically for protection and for carrying out the military responsibility--but I think they should be in more or less a separate category, a separate section, as it were, in the province. The Prov Rep and the Deputy Prov Rep, in all cases, in my opinion, should be civilian. I think that's what we had in mind, trying to get an organization set up so that in the province there would not be the military lines--the cold, hard, impersonal military operation that you're going to find if you have a military man at the top. I'm not at all anti-military, but I'm talking now about the appearance, the effectiveness of an operation of the pacification nature.

I don't think the pacification program can be effectively carried out as a military operation. The people resent it--they don't understand it. The military man still carries over the idea of giving orders.

Some of the Prov Reps were assigned their jobs more or less for rest periods--they had been in active battle for a long time. The poor guys had really seen a lot of active duty and then they were assigned, on this temporary basis, as Prov Reps. Now that man still carried over the idea of giving orders and when a chauffeur or a local employee would come in, there would be no argument--he would issue orders. "You will do this!" That's all there is to it. The civilian employees all down the line were subject to the same thing. I even had some people tell me "Colonel So-and-So is pretty hard to get along with. There are only two ways of doing anything--the Colonel's way or the wrong way." That sort of stuck in my mind. I've had that very same feeling in dealing with some of them. You can just feel the difference between an office run on a military concept as against a civilian concept. To my way of thinking, every single aspect of the pacification program should be headed up by a civilian, and the procedures should be civilian. The military is vital to the operation; in fact, without the military there could be no pacification program, but that doesn't mean that once the military operation is over that the military man should continue to be in charge of the operation. To me it's a mistake to have a military man in charge of a pacification program.

I grant you that if we don't have sufficient civilians to put in those positions, then we'll have to use military. But that still doesn't mean that it makes it right. You don't have to sacrifice your principles just because the assets are not available. We can use the military, but on a temporary basis. It's better to have a military man in charge of a province than nobody at all. But, as I see it, we should always bear in mind that it's a temporary thing and just as soon as we get the bodies, we should get them out there. Up to a month ago, I was very optimistic. I have had several letters from my office in Saigon and one of the letters said that people were just rolling in--they were coming out there so fast that they were having trouble assigning them. That was just a month ago. Now, with this latest terrible calamity, I don't know. I'm afraid we're going to have trouble getting people out there now. In the first place, without the security of the military, it would be very dangerous and

foolhardy to send civilians out to the provinces. They'd just be sitting ducks. In that case, we've got to have the military--as protectors. That doesn't mean that we have to have the military carry out the program and the military people that I've talked to don't want the job of carrying out the pacification program. They recognize their limitations; they recognize that each function is terribly important, but that doesn't mean that they can be completely merged to the extent that you can have a military man in charge of a civilian operation and a civilian in charge of a military operation.

U. S. Bureaucratic Relationships

The AID people feel strongly that they're being asked to do things that no AID program has ever been called upon to do. But on the other hand, I think it can be justified by the fact that this is an abnormal situation. It's a situation which was created under wartime conditions and we can't expect the AID program, or any other program, to operate in a normal fashion. I think in cases of that kind, we have to fall back on the mandate that was given by the White House to the ambassador. The Ambassador is charged with the responsibility of carrying out all the work, other than the actual fighting, within a given country. So in carrying out these extra-curricular activities of each agency the ambassador does have that authority, as I see it, to cause a variation of the work of the various programs. Now it is true that they may run afoul of Congress or even the GAO, and they probably will, but there will have to be an understanding somewhere along the line that abnormal conditions require unusual operations. Someone is going to have to assume the responsibility for these new programs--Chieu Hoi, NLD--that were never even thought of before. Even though it is true, as I see it, that AID is doing work that no other AID program has ever been asked to do--USIA and the other agencies are in the same boat.

The present Regions operation has generated a great deal of controversy. As the Regions are set up now, they are largely autonomous and I'm afraid they've gone too far in that direction. The regional director has veto authority on practically everything that comes out of Saigon, except military orders--I'm speaking about CORDS. It makes for a difficult operation. I share the belief of others

that the Regions are too large. I think they could be reduced considerably. I think that it constitutes, to a large extent, just a layer between the home office and the provinces. The problem there would be, though, that if you eliminated or cut down too much on the Regions, you would have to build up the population in Saigon. It strikes me that there are too many Americans in Saigon, and it is one of the biggest problems that we have to face; and if there's going to be a buildup, it's even going to be worse. I don't know the answer there and I don't know that that's too bad except, of course, it would be better if we could reduce our number of Americans there. There were Americans every place and soldiers everywhere. There was a constant effort on the part of the military to get those people out of Saigon. That was recognized when I was there. I know that General Westmoreland has made numerous efforts to get people out of Saigon and get them to the field. One time when I first got to Saigon, it seemed to me that it was more like being in a street in New York than it was in a foreign country.

What we've got to do there, as I see it, is to strike a balance. People are sent from Saigon out to the Regions with the idea that they will be assigned on down to province level and lower. Somehow or other they get into the Region and they stay there for quite a while--sometimes they're there for weeks. In a number of instances the Prov Reps have been sent to the various Regional Offices for field assignments but the Regional Director has put them in permanent jobs in the Regional Office. One of your graduates from this Center went to Bien Hoa as a Prov Rep. The next thing we knew he'd been assigned to Region as the Executive Officer. I guess he's still there. He's doing a good job, but there again that wasn't what he had been sent there for. I don't know how many other times this may have happened, but it happened often--they're assigned to a Province, but when they get to the Regional Office, they're sidetracked. The more people they get, the more people they need; then they have to have more people to service those people and then more space. I don't think there's any doubt but that every one of the Regions were going in that direction. That's something that could be controlled at the top level. Ambassador Komer could control it by setting ceilings and curtailing the authority of the regional offices to make assignments other than those for which requests have come in. When we have requested six prov reps and we send six of them up, we could then insist that those men go on out as prov reps and not be detoured to take over additional work in the Regions. I know

in practically every Region, time after time I've talked to people there asking them how they got there and what they were doing. They'd say they were actually a prov rep or deputy prov rep, but someone was needed to run the motor pool or to do some other work so "I'm here for the time being." There's lots of that.

Opinion Regarding ATC Training

I've met quite a few of your ATC graduates. There's one thing to me that's absolutely indispensable and that is the need for language proficiency. You can get by very well in Saigon without a good knowledge of Vietnamese but when you get outside Saigon, you had better be able to speak the language or your usefulness is greatly curtailed. I've found in talking to them (I've talked to quite a number of them) is that they go out there with a pretty good general knowledge of the country and its customs. The one shortcoming that we did observe is that they had a very meager knowledge of the organization of CORDS. I know on a number of occasions I've sat down and explained to them just what we do in CORDS--what is CORDS. They generally had a pretty good knowledge of procedures, as far as AID is concerned; they had a pretty good knowledge of what the people do at province level and regional level. I can say then, in summary, that the school has been very good. We were very pleased to have people come out there that had gone through here. I think that all the fellows that came from this school seemed to have a good attitude, a good knowledge of what they're getting into, and they were in a position where they could be assigned immediately to a job and go to work with a minimum amount of detailed instructions.

I think it would be good to have the assignments far enough in advance so a man knows what position he's going to fill, then much more practical application of procedures, etc., could be given to him. In other words, if a man is going to be assigned as executive officer, a procurement officer, a personnel officer, etc., and if he know that in advance, he could have an opportunity to study specifically for his job. It would also help if he had someone here to give him actual, practical knowledge and explanation of the exact work he's going to do. The problem is you can't talk about final assignment until you have enough bodies to do the basic work that's required out there. As long as you have 400 vacancies out of a complement of 1350, that

means that the people out there in the field are going to have to make do--they're going to have to shift people around. There's just nothing you can do about it. If you have a great urgency for an executive officer or a prov rep someplace, the first man that comes in is going to get put in that job. You can't do otherwise. At a later date (and it was fast getting to that point, just before the Tet offensive) they'll reach the point where their vacancies are basically filled; then the assignments can be made and they could be made through here. Now for the first time, as you'll see from that report on MSD, the Personnel Office of CORDS is functioning--they had a good strong man out there in charge of CORDS personnel. He has a staff now of about 16 people. When I first went there, there was one girl, doing all the personnel work for CORDS. We worked day and night to get the organizational patterns worked up. Right now, for the first time, they have their positions slotted; they know exactly the vacancies which exists, they know the positions that should be filled by a civilian or military or could be filled by either. What it amounts to is that by close coordination with CORDS, it should be no problem in the future to have an individual assigned to a particular job. Then from that time on that man could be trained. If there was a change made after that man had arrived, it would only be an emergency. As I say, I don't think that time can come until we have enough bodies out there to take up the slack on all these real rush-rush jobs and I'm afraid that that condition is going to exist for sometime yet.

I would say that ideally training could be and should be done at the post, or as near the post as possible. But I think you have to look at it from the practical standpoint. In the Embassies, in particular, where you have a chronic shortage of people, somebody comes out and you say to yourself, "Now when that person comes out, he's going to be given six weeks' time to study language, etc." The man won't be out there two or three days until the pressure is so great on everybody involved that he is put to work. I don't think it will ever work. Once a man arrives at a post, his frame of mind is such that he wants to go to work and the pressure of his superiors is such that they just can't stand to see a man they need so badly sitting in a classroom all day long studying language. One of the biggest problems I think that exists in the field today is the fact that though the need for training is greatly recognized, you just don't take the time off in the field to get training. Therefore, in my opinion, centralized training is absolutely a must. If a man has not received

training before he arrives at the post, he probably won't get it there. Whether the training is done in Washington, Honolulu, or any other central place is not of such great importance. I think that wherever the facilities are available will serve the purpose; but I do feel that the training should come before he arrives at his post--simply because human nature can't be changed to the extent that if I need a budget fiscal officer or a personnel clerk and Joe Blow comes out to report to me for that job, but he's supposed to take six weeks' training, I'm afraid that the pressure would be so great that I'd say "Now look, Joe, suppose you do this? You go to work today and half a day you can work and can go to school the other half." That might work for the first week, but after a while he says, "To heck with that, I want to get to work."

I have the feeling that a setup like this (ATC) is far superior to the training you get at FSI in Washington. It's more of a practical nature, it's more concentrated. I attended the FSI in Washington and it's mass production. It's good for general information and general indoctrination into the service, especially for new people that have never been in foreign service before. As far as specialized training is concerned, I don't think there is anything that could beat a setup similar to what you have here regardless of where it is. I think the people in Washington also agree that you're in a better position out here to concentrate on training the individual and to specialize in this training. FSI still serves a very useful purpose, though, in giving a broad general indoctrination. They handle a lot of new people that have never been outside the United States before and it's necessary to give them some general guidelines and a feel of what they're getting into. To follow this general indoctrination and really get down to brass tacks, I think a school of this type here is an excellent arrangement.