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U.S. Mission Planning New Viet Coordination

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Expanding American Mission here hopes to experiment soon with a plan to keep its field representatives from falling over each other as they deal with Vietnamese.

For the next three months, in three selected provinces, efforts will be coordinated by a "team captain" who is either a military man, someone from the U.S. Operations Mission (USOM) or an appointee from the embassy as Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor's representative.

The main idea is to improve the frequently tangled operations in those provinces where the government's writ still runs. In areas where political, economic and military plans are being pressed, there have been frequent instances of jurisdictional wrangles among Americans, as well as complaints of Vietnamese inefficiency.

There is also recognition that when too many Americans have the ear of a hard-pressed province chief—who must be lawgiver and community planner as well as top soldier—the confusion is too much for him to cope with. Sometimes he resolves that problem by playing one against the other and simply getting nothing done.

The new plan would provide that one American rather than several would deal with the province chief. Because he would have no overriding authority, great emphasis is placed on his role as a coordinator rather than as boss.

Mission leaders here feel that this way they stand a chance of getting more value out of the effort being expended in the provinces. Many will agree that the blame for malfunctioning programs does not lie solely with an inexperienced province chief and his undertrained assistants.

The man named team cap-

tain would attempt to coordinate the activities of USOM, USIS, CIA, the military assistance command, the Foreign Service or other interested members of the official American family.

One of the provinces chosen for the experiment is Darlac in the central highlands. One of the chief concerns there is a sociological or political one, for it was in the province capital of Banmethuot last November that dissident Montagnard tribesmen staged a shortlived rebellion. Things are quiet now, but advisers on the spot are keeping their fingers crossed.

The representative from the Embassy who is to be named coordinator is William Beecher of New York, 33, who has specialized in Montagnard affairs and is doing his second tour of duty in Viet-Nam. He will report directly to the Embassy.

Far to the south, in the coastal province of Binhthuan with its provincial capital of Phan Thiet, Chester (Chet) Richardson of Salem, Ore., will be reporting to the Embassy as well as running the USOM development operation. Binhthuan is a farming and fishing community where government control has slipped badly in recent months, with at least five hamlets along Highway 1 being destroyed by Viet Cong.

The most southerly of the three provinces chosen for the experiment is Dinh Tuong, one of the most populous in the Mekong Delta region and located in the critical area southeast of Saigon.

Its provincial capital of My Tho is home to the famous Seventh Division now attached to the Fourth Corps, and this Division frequently figured in Saigon's coup activity.