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TO: Department of State

INFO: CINCPAC FOR POLAD

FROM: American Embassy SAIGON

July 15, 1965

SUBJECT: Monthly Report on Provincial Developments

REF: Embassy's A-915 to Department, June 19, 1965
Embassy's A-926 to CINCPAC, June 22, 1965

The "Report on Provincial Developments for June" is forwarded as an attachment. This Report is prepared by the Embassy Political Section for the Ambassador and Deputy Ambassador as a summary and analysis of replies to a standing questionnaire on the state of security and rural reconstruction in each province.

For the June reporting period several new questions were introduced and several existing questions were revised. Such changes are identified within the report this month; subsequent monthly reports will omit these explanatory notes.

For the Ambassador:

Melvin L. Manfull
Counselor of Embassy
for Political Affairs

Enclosure:

1. Report on Provincial Developments for June.

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Enclosure #1
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from Saigon

TO: The Ambassador
THROUGH: Deputy Ambassador
FROM: Melvin L. Manfull
SUBJECT: Report on Provincial Developments for June 1965

On the attached spreadsheets are shown replies to the Ambassador's questionnaire on provincial developments during June. MACV sector advisors and USOM province representatives have submitted joint replies which are summarized below and to which comments of the Embassy provincial political reporters are appended where appropriate.

There is no significant overall trend. Some indicators have moved downwards slightly, but these are counterbalanced by sideways movements of others and improvements in a few areas. There does seem to be a fairly close correspondence between movement of the indicators and the relative intensification or subsidence of VC activity. Thus the most encouraging developments come from the IV Corps, the least encouraging situations are found in I and II Corps areas, and III Corps provinces are found somewhere in between. In sum, the nationwide trend seems to indicate that security and rural reconstruction programs are either making slow progress or receding somewhat because of the VC summer offensive -- on balance, then, the status of provincial developments was at a standstill during June 1965.

Summaries of replies from the 44 provinces are as follows:

1. Are principal GVN provincial and district officials performing effectively?

There were 39 affirmative replies this month, 33 in May, and 31 in April. Of the 14 negative replies this month, most concerned incompetent district chiefs and service chiefs at province level as was also the case in May. There was only one case in which a province chief was singled out as incompetent. No significant trend seems to emerge from the pattern of responses in recent months.

(Provincial reporters concur in the overall finding that province and district officials perform competently.)

2 a. On balance, are GVN officials receptive to U.S. advice and cooperation?

The 39 affirmative replies this month contrast with 41 in May and 42 in April. Explanations offered for the five negative replies this month generally indicate that Vietnamese counterparts seek to avoid U.S. advisors, ignore or fail to act on advice when given, or both. The downturn in affirmative replies seems slight, especially since only one province chief was considered unreceptive.

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(Provincial reporters concur in the overall finding of receptivity; in their experience counterpart receptivity ~~under the circumstances~~ is greater than these data might tend to suggest. Considering the strain and circumstances brought on by the insurgency under which advisory activities take place, the productivity and cordiality of most counterpart relations seem nearly exemplary.)

2 b. In view of the increase in U.S. participation in the war-effort, are there indications of an attitude on the part of GVN officials to "let the Americans do it?"

This question is new, appearing in June for the first time. There are 35 negative responses and 9 affirmative responses. Illustrations given to explain affirmative replies include readiness of some GVN officials to rely first upon U.S. airpower and logistical support rather than Vietnamese resources; "buck-passing" difficult requests to U. S. advisors in lieu of processing matters through Vietnamese channels; and the resigned view that "Americans can do the (counterinsurgency) job better."

(Provincial reporters have no additional comment on this matter.)

3. Are the U.S. personnel (MACV, JUSPAO, USOM) presently assigned adequate for present tasks in numbers and types?

This month 20 provinces sent affirmative replies, compared with 14 in May and 10 in April. The increase in "yes" answers seems to represent a significant improvement resulting from increased numbers of USOM and JUSPAO field personnel. Most of the fourteen negative replies this month mention as yet unmet requirements for still more USOM and JUSPAO field personnel, although there is mention of need for additional sub-sector advisory teams.

(Provincial reporters have found ample staffing of American advisory personnel in almost all locations. A matter worthy of continuous concern and review is whether the size of the total advisory staff in any province furthers or hinders the advisory effort. In numerous locations, the local advisory establishment would seem to have reached or neared the saturation point as far as the ability of Vietnamese counterparts to absorb the advice and assistance already available is concerned.)

4 a. Is the general attitude of the population toward the GVN favorable or unfavorable?

This is a new question, based on a modification of an existing question retained as 4 b, below. Affirmative replies came from 41 provinces and negative replies from 3. The 3 provinces reporting unfavorable attitudes are Quang Ngai, Phuoc Long, and Mau Nghia, all of which have come under heavy and sustained VC attack in recent months. The replies indicate that

the prime cause of the unfavorable attitudes is popular resentment that the GVN has been unable to assure physical security, i.e. to spare the populace from the violence they have just experienced. It is of some interest that all provinces of II Corps and IV Corps report attitudes favoring the GVN, despite wide discrepancies in the respective security situations prevailing in these Corps areas.

(Provincial reporters concur in the finding that in general the population favors the GVN and have no additional comment.)

4 b. Compared to the previous month, is the general attitude toward the GVN more favorable, less favorable, or unchanged?

A tabular breakdown of responses for June and the two preceding months is as follows:

	<u>More favorable</u>	<u>Less favorable</u>	<u>Unchanged</u>
June	7	1	36
May	14	4	26
April	10	0	34

The response seems to indicate an encouraging trend in that shifts in attitude consistently tend to favor the GVN. Five of the seven provinces reporting more favorable attitudes are located in IV Corps, scene of relatively improved security conditions. On the other hand, Quang Ngai's less favorable attitude was probably a result of the erosion of security which the province has experienced.

(Provincial reporters concur in the overall finding and have no additional comments.)

4 c. Has there been any indication of an "anti-American" attitude among (1) the general population? (2) religious/ethnic groups? (3) political parties?

This is a new question. Among the 132 responses (i.e. 44 provinces x 3 parts to the question) there were only 2 reported instances of anti-American attitudes. One came from Thua Thien province where police discovered that a group of xenophobic university students were printing and distributing anti-American literature. The second instance was reported from Kien Hoa province, where rumors circulated among Catholic and Cao Dai religious groups that Americans were responsible for increasing air strikes in the province -- evidently an unpopular development.

(While provincial reporters concur in the overall finding that there is an extremely low incidence of anti-American attitudes in South Vietnam, their experience indicates that these monthly reports understate the case if the criterion "any indication" is applied strictly. Numerous expressions, both verbal and written, of an anti-American attitude have

emanated from non-Communist Vietnamese. However, these attitudes have thus far been virtually eclipsed by the far more numerous instances of pro-American attitudes which have come to light.)

5 a. Is the morale of the people such as to indicate a willingness to continue the conflict?

This is a new question, a modification of an earlier question retained as 5 b, below. There were affirmative responses from 39 provinces and negative responses from 5. Impaired morale in these 5 provinces was ascribed to several factors. In Quang Tin it was due to "apathy" in rural areas; in Phu Bon it came about because of deteriorating security; in Phuoc Long and Bau Nghia defeatism after severe VC onslaught was responsible; in Vinh Binh adverse morale was the product of "war fatigue" among residents of long-contested areas.

(Provincial reporters concur in the general finding that popular morale sustains willingness to continue the conflict and have no additional comment.)

5 b. Have morale and willingness of the people to continue the conflict improved or deteriorated over the previous month?

A tabular breakdown of responses for June and the two preceding months is as follows:

	<u>IMPROVED</u>	<u>DETERIORATED</u>	<u>UNCHANGED</u>
June	7	6	31
May	13	5	26
April	19	0	25

This indicator shows a downturn in that cases of improvement decreased sharply since last month, while cases of deterioration rose slightly. Improvement occurred in six Delta provinces, where security has tended to improve, as well as in Binh Thuan, where conversely a kind of indignant reaction to recent acceleration of VC terrorism has occurred. Three of the six cases of deteriorating morale took place in provinces recently under severe pressure from the VC, namely Quang Ngai, Kontum, and Phu Bon. In two other provinces -- Tuyen Duc and Binh Long -- gradual slippage of previously secure situations, relatively speaking, seems responsible, while in Phu Yen food shortages constituted the morale depressant.

(Provincial reporters have noted sobered and occasionally anxious popular reactions to the intensification of VC activity these past several months; they therefore concur in the findings as shown above and have no additional comment.)

6 a. Is the conduct of the GVN armed forces, including Regional Forces/Popular Forces (RF/PF) toward the civilian population satisfactory?

Affirmative responses came from 41 provinces and negative responses came from 3. In May 38 provinces responded affirmatively; in April 36 did so. Negative replies this month came from Quang Tin and Dinh Tuong, where relatively minor infractions of good discipline occurred, as well as from Binh Thuan, where mistreatment of both civilians and suspected VC under apprehension was reported. Despite the serious allegations from the latter province, the trend is clearly encouraging and has risen steadily in past months.

(Provincial reporters concur in the general finding above and have no additional comment.)

6 b. Is the conduct of the U.S. armed forces toward the civilian population satisfactory?

This is a new question.

Affirmative replies came from all 44 provinces.

(Provincial reporters concur in this finding; at the same time they have noted several instances of misdemeanors committed by a few members of certain newly-arrived force contingents. Maintenance of the praiseworthy record shown above will depend upon prevention of incidents through rigorous exercise of disciplinary sanctions and community relations programs now going into effect.)

7 a. Is there general freedom of circulation over main routes of communication (1) during daylight hours? (2) at night?

This is a new question, derived from modifications of earlier questions concerning trends in selected indicators of security.

Provinces reporting free circulation during daylight hours numbered 22; provinces reporting free circulation at night numbered 6. Eleven of the 22 "day" provinces were located in IV Corps, as were 4 of the 6 "night" provinces. Only 5 of 17 provinces in I and II Corps reported general freedom of circulation by day, and only 1 province therein has free circulation by night.

(Provincial reporters concur with the representation of the situation, as shown above in the understanding that respondents have tended to stress the qualifier "general" within the question. If, however, "general freedom of circulation" were construed to mean "virtually complete freedom of circulation," then perhaps only 10 - 12 provinces enjoy this by day and very few provinces by night.)

7 b. Have VC activities had an impact upon the normal movement of goods and produce?

This, too, is a new question, derived as was 7 a.

Thirty-three provinces report that some impact has occurred, while eleven report no impact. All 18 provinces of II Corps reported some impact, as did 4 of 5 provinces in I Corps. Conversely, 6 of 15 provinces in IV Corps reported no impact.

(Provincial reporters concur that VC activities have had a wide-reaching impact on such movements. Furthermore, they would maintain that a discrepancy appears between responses to this question and responses to 7 a ("general freedom of circulation"), with 7 b probably the more accurate index.)

7 c. Has there been an improvement in GVN control of resources over the previous month?

This question is a new one rephrasing an earlier question about progress, regression, or lack of change in this indicator.

This month 18 provinces responded affirmatively, compared with 11 in May and 13 in April. (Comparison between the figure of 26 negative replies this month and deterioration, no change replies in earlier months is not valid.) Provinces reporting improvement were scattered throughout the four Corps areas. Most of the affirmative replies explained that checkpoints, rationing, police operations, and other measures had come into being or were prosecuted more vigorously during the month. Because resources control is still in the beginning stages in so many provinces, inconsistency between the trends of responses in 7 c and 7 b is more apparent than real.

(Provincial reporters concur in the finding that GVN controls over resources are increasingly effective and have no additional comments.)

7 d. Is the population willingly giving intelligence to the Government concerning the VC?

This question rephrases an earlier one which asked whether there were an increase or decrease in such willingness. Because of the changed basis of the query comparability with earlier months is not possible.

Affirmative replies came from 32 provinces; 12 provinces replied in the negative. There was some correlation between affirmative responses and improvements in security conditions. Thus while 12 of 15 provinces in IV Corps answered "yes" only 12 of 18 in I - II Corps did so. The principal reason given by provinces to explain "no" answers was obvious: popular fears of retaliation by the VC.

7 e. What is the operational effectiveness of forces under sector control, including the regular army (ARVN), RF, and PF?

This is a new question, rephrasing an earlier query about improvement, lack of improvement, or no change during the month. Comparability with previous months, therefore, is not possible.

Asked to rate these forces as "excellent", "good", "fair", or "poor", the 44 provinces replied as follows: excellent - 0; good - 15; fair - 26; poor - 3. (Where the various components were rated separately the writer has made a judgment and established a single rating for the respective province.) On a corps-by-corps basis the breakdown is: I Corps - all 5 provinces rated "fair"; II Corps - 3 "good", 8 "fair", and 2 "poor"; III Corps - 3 "good", 7 "fair", and 1 "poor"; IV Corps - 8 "good" and 6 "fair". The 3 provinces reporting "poor" ratings of sector-controlled forces explained that understrength units (Quang Duc and Binh Tuy) or ineffective leadership and deployment (Ham Nghia) accounted for the situation.

(Provincial reporters find themselves in general agreement with the range of ratings shown above and have no additional comments.)

8. In the light of all factors, on balance is rural reconstruction progressing satisfactorily in your province? If not, what is the primary weakness?

A comparison of recent months follows:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
June	17	27
May	19	25
April	16	28

By corps areas, provinces replying "yes" numbered as follows: I Corps - 1 of 5 provinces; II Corps - 2 of 13 provinces; III Corps - 7 of 11 provinces; IV Corps - 7 of 15 provinces.

The most common primary weakness listed to explain lack of satisfactory progress is the problem of insufficient manpower available for the rural reconstruction effort. Several provinces reported that intensification of VC activity had resulted in a shrinkage of the area in which rural reconstruction activities were complete or in process. Shortages of materials needed for construction projects was a prime weakness in a few provinces. Two provinces placed the burden of prime weakness upon local leadership, charging that rural reconstruction activity lacked a coordinated focus or reflected the defensive outlook of the province's officials.

(Provincial reporters would take some exception to "yes" answers submitted by certain provinces. Their dissent is founded upon the contradiction between the trend of security conditions, on the one hand, and the reported progress, on the other, in the respective provinces. They interpret progress in rural reconstruction to mean net consolidation and extension of the GVN presence in a given province. In this broader sense then, as differentiated from considering such progress as only the attainment of fixed organizational and physical goals attached to rural reconstruction activities, the provincial reporters would take issue with 6 "yes" answers and on the same basis, with 2 "no" answers. Provincial reporters' estimates of the state of rural reconstruction, then, would show progress in 13 provinces and lack of progress in 31, as contrasted with the provincial representatives' estimates of 17 and 27, respectively.)