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6 November 1969

RESTRICTED HANDLING

TO: SAIGON CITE HEADQUARTERS 312 (b)(1) (b)(3)

[redacted]

FOR [redacted] ONLY FROM [redacted] (b)(3) (b)(3)

REFS: A. SAIGON 6108

B. DIRECTOR 51863

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1. BACKGROUND TO MESSAGE FROM GENERAL WHEELER DISCUSSED IN REF A INVOLVES COMPLEX AMALGAM OF EMOTIONAL AND POLITICAL FACTORS. WHEN ARMY SECRETARY RESOR RETURNED FROM HIS RECENT VIETNAM VISIT, HE SUBMITTED TRIP REPORT TO SECRETARY ~~XX~~ LAIRD WHICH ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ CONTAINED FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS IN SECTION ON PHOENIX PROGRAM:

"ALMOST EVERYONE WE SPOKE TO AGREED THAT THE PHOENIX PROGRAM IS NOT FUNCTIONING WELL. THE NUMBER OF VCI ELIMINATED WAS SIGNIFICANTLY LESS THAN THE GOALS ESTABLISHED, BUT THESE GOALS ARE QUITE ARBITRARY. THE VCI ELIMINATED ARE, WITH RARE EXCEPTION, PEOPLE WITH LOW LEVEL POSITIONS. THE NUMBER REPORTED ELIMINATED EACH MONTH INCLUDES CHIEU HOI'S AND THOSE KILLED OR CAPTURED BY CHANCE IN ORDINARY COMBAT OPERATIONS. CHIEU HOI'S HAVE ACCOUNTED FOR ABOUT 20% OF THE ELIMINATIONS THIS YEAR. THOSE ELIMINATED BY ORDINARY COMBAT

SECRET

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OPERATIONS ARE ESTIMATED TO BE 35% TO 95% OF THE TOTAL KILLED OR CAPTURED; THUS ONLY A FRACTION OF TOTAL ELIMINATED CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO PHOENIX-INSPIRED OPERATIONS. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CAUSE CITED FOR FAILURE OF THE PROGRAM TO MEET EXPECTATIONS IS THE LACK OF ENTHUSIASM NOT ONLY AMONG VIETNAMESE PEOPLE BUT AMONG MANY VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, PERHAPS EVEN EXTENDING TO PRESIDENT THIEU. IT IS STILL THOUGHT OF AS AN AMERICAN PROGRAM.

"A SUCCESSFUL AND HIGHLY REGARDED PROVINCE CHIEF STATED THAT THE PROGRAM EXACTS TOO HIGH A PENALTY IN RELATION TO THE TYPE OF PERSONS WHO ARE ROUNDED UP. PARTICULARLY IN THOSE AREAS WHERE THE VIETMINH AND THE VC HAVE BEEN IN CONTROL FOR MANY YEARS, THE GOVERNMENT POSTURE PROBABLY SHOULD BE MORE A POSTURE OF RECONCILIATION THAN OF CONDEMNATION OF FORMER VC.

"THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM IS THE DANGER THAT WE MAY MAKE THE PROGRAM MORE EFFICIENT AND THUS CAUSE A LARGE SEGMENT OF THE VIETNAMESE POPULATION TO BE CONDEMNED TO DEATH OR LONG IMPRISONMENT NOT BECAUSE OF ANY PROVEN ACT AGAINST THE STATE BUT BECAUSE OF POLITICAL AFFILIATION. THE CONSEQUENCE IN WORLD PUBLIC OPINION (TO SAY NOTHING OF MORALITY OR LEGALITY) OF A BASICALLY MISCONCEIVED BUT A MORE EFFICIENTLY

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EXECUTED PROGRAM WOULD BE INCALCULABLE. THE PROGRAM AS A WHOLE NEEDS TO BE REEXAMINED AND REAPPRAISED. ATTACHED IS AN EXCELLENT DISCUSSION PREPARED BY JIM SIENA, DEPUTY TO THE UNDER SECRETARY OF THE ARMY FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS."

2. AS INDICATED, APPENDED TO RESOR'S TRIP REPORT WAS A FIVE-PAGE, SINGLE-SPACED MEMO ENTITLED "THE PHOENIX PROGRAM," SIGNED BY MR. SIENA, WHICH AMPLIFIED AND EXPANDED THE ARGUMENTS OUTLINED ABOVE.

3. ON A VERY PRIVATE AND PERSONAL BASIS, SECRETARY LAIRD GAVE ME A COPY OF RESOR'S REPORT PLUS SIENA'S MEMO AND ASKED FOR OUR FRANK AND PRIVATE COMMENTS ON BOTH. MY ASSOCIATES PREPARED TWO MEMORANDA, ONE DEALING SPECIFICALLY WITH SIENA'S ARGUMENTS, THE OTHER ANALYZING CURRENT TRENDS IN PHOENIX/ PHUNG HOANG DATA, BOTH OF WHICH I GAVE TO MESSRS. LAIRD AND PACKARD ON AN EYES ONLY BASIS. THEY WERE QUITE APPRECIATIVE AND SAID THESE MEMOS HAD HELPED THEM SEE THE PHOENIX MATTER AND RELATED ISSUES IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE. (WE DID NOT TAX YOU FOR ASSISTANCE IN THIS EXERCISE BECAUSE A QUICK CHECK INDICATED THAT WE ALREADY HAD ALL THE NECESSARY DATA IN HAND AND I AM TRYING HARD TO AVOID OVERLOADING YOUR CIRCUITS. WE WILL OF COURSE BE HAPPY TO POUCH YOU THESE TWO MEMORANDA IF YOU WANT TO SEE THEM.)

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4. RESOR, APPARENTLY, CONTINUED TO BROOD ABOUT THE PHOENIX PROGRAM AND, ESPECIALLY, THE PRU'S. IN LATE OCTOBER, HE TRIED TO GET SECRETARY LAIRD TO SUPPORT THE INITIATION OF A THOROUGHGOING, FULL-DRESS REVIEW OF PHOENIX AND THE PRU PROGRAM KEYED TO THE CONCERNS OUTLINED IN SIENA'S MEMO. THIS PITCH WAS SUPPORTED BY THE ALLEGATION THAT LITTLE DETAILED INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE TO THE DOD ON THE OPERATIONAL METHODS OF THE PRU. THROUGH A LITTLE DISCREET LOBBYING WITH PACKARD AND LAIRD, WHICH INCLUDED CALLING THEIR ATTENTION TO THE INACCURACY OF THIS UNFOUNDED ALLEGATION (AMBASSADOR COLBY AND [redacted] COULD PROVIDE ANY LEVEL OF (b)(3) DETAIL DESIRED ON PRU OPERATIONS), I MANAGED TO GET THE IMPETUS FOR THIS REVIEW CONSIDERABLY TONED DOWN, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING.

5. THE MESSAGE ABRAMS RECEIVED REFLECTS FALL OUT FROM THE STIRRINGS OUTLINED ABOVE. THE QUESTIONS INVOLVED ARE TRICKY SINCE RESOR CLEARLY HAS A NUMBER OF THINGS ON HIS MIND, SOME OF THEM RATHER OBSCURE TO US. IN PART HE SEEMS TO BE REACTING TO THE [redacted] FLAP AND HE MAY BE MOVING TO (b)(1) DEFUSE ANY POTENTIAL CRISES IN A WHOLE RANGE OF ENDEAVORS (b)(3) WHICH ENCOMPASS SOME OF THE MISSIONS OF THE PRU'S, OR AT LEAST GET THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY SUCH FUTURE FLAPS CLEARLY FIXED IN ADVANCE ON RVROCK.

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6. THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND REFLECTIONS ARE OBVIOUSLY FOR YOUR EYES ONLY. WE WILL KEEP YOU ADVISED OF RELEVANT DEVELOPMENTS AT THE WASHINGTON END AND NATURALLY WOULD APPRECIATE RECIPROCITY FROM YOUR END. WE WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE KNOWING IF YOU ARE AWARE OF ANY SPECIFIC INCIDENTS OR BRIEFINGS WHICH MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO GETTING RESOR, SIENA OR ANY OF THEIR SPEAR CARRYING, MEMO DRAFTING AIDES SO UP TIGHT ON PHOENIX AND THE PRU.

7. AS INDICATED IN REF B, WE THINK THE LINE YOU ARE NOW TAKING ON THIS BUSINESS IS JUST RIGHT.

END OF MESSAGE

C/VNO [redacted] (b)(3) (b)(6)

C/FE

DDP

[redacted] (b)(3) (b)(6)

George A. Carver, Jr.
O/DCI/SAVA
Releasing Officer

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