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PROPOSED CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF VIETNAM ADVISORS

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I. TITLE

Proposed Criteria for Selection of Vietnam Advisors

II. PROBLEM

The effectiveness of the Navy's contribution to Vietnamization programs depends to a considerable degree on the advisors assigned by the Navy to work with Vietnamese naval forces. Since the advisory role calls for unusual activities which are not ordinarily performed by Navy officers, different selection, training and administrative procedures may be necessary to increase the probability of success of those assigned as advisors. The choice of selection and training procedures is made difficult because only sketchy and unsystematic data are available on what an advisor does and what factors in him or in his assignment influence success or failure. For that matter, except for accounts of individual cases of conspicuous success or failure, there are few data of acceptable reliability and validity which would serve as criteria against which to develop selection and training programs. In spite of the uncertainty of the job description and the lack of data on actual performance of past advisors, the task is of such importance to current American policy that attempts to improve selection and training procedures are warranted, especially if procedures to monitor performance could be implemented to produce data which, in turn, would influence subsequent selection and training activities.

It is our purpose to propose selection procedures which may be integrated with training and administrative policies to increase the effectiveness of men assigned as advisors. No special selection tests or techniques are proposed because none have proven effective in earlier studies where attempts

have been made to select personnel for overseas assignments. It is proposed that reliance be placed on history data in the personnel jackets, ratings and evaluations by the potential advisor's current commanding officer and, finally, data supplied by the man himself.

III. BACKGROUND

a. Selection procedures

With the increase in American involvement in developing countries since World War II there has been a corresponding rising concern about factors which determine the effectiveness of Americans assigned to work abroad. This is true of the Department of Defense and of civilian agencies as well, such as the Foreign Aid Program, Fulbright Exchange Program, Peace Corps, American foundations, and American business. All of these organizations select in one way or another and all are acutely aware that the success of their efforts is dependent on the quality of the performance of their personnel in their relationships with host country nationals. The most formidable impediment to progress in improvement of selection, however, has been the criterion problem. There are many ways to succeed in an alien culture and many to fail and until these are understood more clearly the technology of selection cannot function well. If foreign assignments actually require any qualities different from American assignments these qualities must be specified so that they can be assessed, incorporated and weighted in selection criteria.

In the review which follows we shall refer first to DOD studies on selection and then to selected studies of civilian agencies. The Naval Personnel Research and Development Laboratory (1970) has reported a study of officers who had served as advisors in Vietnam, 18 of whom had been designated effective and 14 ineffective. Using data from their individual

personnel jackets it was found that effective more than ineffective advisors tended to have a higher level of education with more exposure to the social sciences, to have earned their commission at an earlier age, and to have better scores on the Officer Fitness Report prior to their service in Vietnam. These results are suggestive rather than definitive because of the small number of cases involved and also because of the unknown validity of the criterion of effectiveness by which they were categorized. The results are, however, compatible with those of Askenasy (1969) having to do with the factors affecting the accuracy of American officers' perceptions of Korean nationals' attitudes and opinions.

The Peace Corps was launched in 1961 with a strong emphasis on rigorous selection, and the low rate of premature return of volunteers during the first few years seemed to attest to the effectiveness of the selection procedures. More recently, however, when supposedly the selection procedures had been validated, the rate of return prior to completion of assignment has increased greatly. Terminations during training have doubled at one of the major training sites (Hilo, Hawaii) between 1962 and 1970. These changes over time are almost certainly the expression of changes in the sense of mission of the volunteers. The similarities of education level and cultural background of Navy officers and volunteers are such that the Peace Corps experience suggests that Navy selection procedures should pay a good deal of attention to the officer's convictions about the importance of the advisory effort in Vietnam.

Other Peace Corps experience is also quite germane to Navy concerns. In one of the few studies of Peace Corps Volunteers in which data were obtained on performance in the field, Guthrie and Zektick (1967) found very low correlations between various predictors and ratings obtained during

training and ratings of performance obtained from American Peace Corps staff in the Philippines who had been with the volunteers during their two year tour of duty. The correlations ranged from .17 to .36 (N = 278) with the best predictor being the pooled judgement of a final selection board. Performance ratings by Filipinos who lived in the communities where the volunteers had served were obtained on 70 of these volunteers (Lynch et al 1966). The correlations between the predictors mentioned above and these performance ratings by host nationals ranged form -.04 to .06, as close to zero as one can get. The Filipino training staff's evaluation correlated .00 with their countrymen's later performance evaluation. The agreement between the American field supervisors' ratings of performance of the volunteers and that of the Filipino counterparts was .37. This suggests that there is very little continuity between behavior patterns observed in training and those observed on the assignment and it also suggests that Americans and local nationals value quite different qualities of an American's performance in an alien setting. Other studies of Peace Corps volunteers in Latin America (Stein 1966) and Africa (Mischel 1965) corroborate these findings. It would appear that the demands of a foreign culture are sufficiently different from those which Americans have learned to meet that there is little or no relationship between an American's effectiveness at home and his effectiveness abroad, at least within groups as homogeneous as those represented by the Peace Corps.

In a follow-up survey of 450 Filipinos who had received special training in the United States, Peter and Schlesinger (1959) found that the Filipinos' self-ratings of subsequent performance showed a low positive correlation with their supervisors' ratings of the same variable but neither of these two

ratings correlated significantly with those obtained from American advisors in the Philippines. As was the case with the Peace Corps, American raters and foreign raters do not seem to agree on who is doing a good job.

Peter and Henry (1961) have examined the problems of predicting and measuring Americans' performance overseas from the perspective of a major American oil company. They suggest that useful predictors might be found in the personal history, language-learning readiness, success in training, and intelligence of potential applicants. In addition to supervisors' and host nationals' evaluations they suggest other criteria of performance such as a self-appraisal, judgement of outside experts and, where possible, objective measures of accomplishments. This last mentioned variable could include volume of new business or quantity and quality of production of a plant under the ratee's supervision. While they do not report an implementation of this scheme, they do suggest that the correlations obtained by others on various criteria of successful performance indicate that there is not one criterion of excellence but several. This means that selection programs may be confronted with the need to select people who will meet a number of independent criteria of good performance. The problem is not formidable statistically with the aid of a computer, but it requires reasonably large numbers of subjects and careful collection of criteria data.

There have also been a number of studies of American government personnel serving abroad. Mandell (1953) collected performance data and information schedules on U.S. government personnel in Western Europe, Asia, Guam, and Alaska. A combined Self Description Inventory and Inventory of Activities, Interests and Preferences proved highly predictive. On 60 State Deparmtent

and Foreign Aid personnel in a cross-validation study, a relatively low cutting score would have eliminated 14 of 24 ineffective but only 4 of 34 effective personnel. A high cutting score would have selected 18 effective and only 1 ineffective person. The cutting score could be chosen depending on the ratio of applicants to openings and on the cost of accepting poor prospects. Similar encouraging results were found with other groups, including DOD personnel. The major shortcoming of the study is that data were collected while personnel were on assignment rather than during training or selection. Accordingly, we do not know how much respondents might distort responses to achieve or avoid selection. For reasons that we do not know, the methods developed in this report have not been applied.

In addition to the foregoing evaluations of selection and prediction efforts, there are many qualitative studies of factors affecting performance overseas. These studies yield suggestions of potential selection and/or training techniques and also suggest administrative procedures which may affect performance in the field. The study most relevant to our concern is included in the NPRDL report cited above. Briefly, four groups of Navy officers who had returned from duty as advisors in Vietnam were interviewed on 11 Mar 1970. They emphasized that personal qualities essential to success as an advisor included tact, cooperativeness, a high tolerance for frustrating events, initiative and sobriety. Such skills as speaking Vietnamese, being able to repair diesel engines, being able to use small arms and to defend against infiltration were important to success, to say nothing of survival. Finally, these officers stressed the importance of the career implications of this assignment. Since it was out of the ordinary character of the

assignments which ambitious officers desired to enhance their careers, there were many suggestions that men who went on advisor assignments were losing so far as their own careers were concerned. Not only did this mean that there was few incentives to extend oneself to do a good job, but the ambiguity and gossip about the assignment actually lowered the morale of many advisors.

Graham (1969) and Froehlich (1968) have assembled very valuable summaries of desirable qualities and techniques for military advisors. These two papers should be available or summarized for detailers.

In research which has not been published, the Overseas Training Center of the University of Hawaii interviewed AID province representatives returning from Vietnam. Data from these interviews were given to the training staff of the Center to use with current personnel being trained for province representative assignments. In addition to many of the points emphasized by the officers cited above, the returning representatives emphasized the need for an overlap of several weeks in the assignment of representatives (advisors) so that the incumbent could teach the newcomer the subtleties of the assignment and the politics of local Vietnamese power structure before the newcomer started out on his own. Much time, confusion and fruitless effort could saved by such a policy. They also emphasized the need for an understanding of both the Vietnamese and the U.S. bureaucracy so that administrative delays and adverse decisions could be taken with somewhat more equanimity than would otherwise be the case.

In a coordinated series of studies of technical assistants supported by the Ford Foundation, Finkle and Storm (1964), Guthrie and Spencer (1963) and Fein (1964) also found that the bureaucracies, both American and host

country, were major sources of difficulty to advisors and that learning to work effectively with the host country's administrative policies and traditions constituted a major hurdle to satisfying accomplishments. Concentrating on engineers, Fein (1964) found much less experience of frustration than was true of advisors who were concerned with public administration, agriculture or education. Certain assignments, it appears, involve sufficiently objective matters that conflicts of cultures do not arise.

b. Training programs

Brislin (1970) has published recently a review and evaluation of DOD training programs preparing men for assignments in other cultures. Although the programs are well conceived and elegantly theoretical, their effectiveness has not been evaluated except in a few limited instances. Similarly Peace Corps training programs have not been evaluated in the sense that the efficacy of different strategies and of no training have been determined using objective indices. The recent higher attrition in training and in the field suggests that training programs are getting worse or social support is declining. On interview both PCVs and technical assistance personnel have expressed doubts about the efficacy of any training program, insisting that one can only learn about a culture by living in it. Such anecdotal material also suggests that the first few weeks on assignment is a highly impressionable period and that a sort of apprentice relationship to an experienced American might be the most effective learning situation in which to acquire skills essential to the assignment.

c. Special requirements of the advisor assignment

In order to develop a selection program it is essential to identify some of the major requirements and problems of the assignment above and beyond

those of more typical Navy assignments. The following list is not exhaustive but it should suggest certain skills and qualities an advisor should possess or acquire.

1. Military skills, especially those required on RVN craft and in the type of combat and other hazards encountered by RVN naval personnel on and off shore.

2. Maintenance skills with RVN-type craft, communications gear, and ordnance.

3. An understanding of Vietmanese character and customs so that their reactions and decisions are reasonable (at least to them) and predictable to the American. This would include also an understanding of the important differences between American and Vietnamese character.

4. Ability to communicate in Vietnamese, at least at a minimal level, a matter which implies acceptance of them and which also reduces the barriers so that greater trust is possible both ways.

5. Self-discipline with respect to alcohol, women, and the tempations of black marketing. A lack of self-discipline reduces or destroys an officer's effectiveness in Vietnam just as it does elsewhere. The problem is that the incentives and controls are different in Vietnam than in more usual assignments.

6. A sense of purpose and direction about the Vietmanization policy and the American presence in Vietman. As elsewhere, the officer must believe in his mission and accept his part in the total effort before he can do a good job.

7. Of great importance is a clarification of the relationship of this assignment to orderly progress in grade and promotibility of the officers

detailed to advisory posts in Vietnam. They cannot be expected to work effectively if it has no potential to enhance their career and they may lose much of their effectiveness if the impression or policy develops that the assignment goes to the less favored.

8. Since it takes time to become effective on the job it may prove necessary for a policy to be developed which would extend advisor assignments beyond one year. AID, the Peace Corps and many U.N. organizations have adopted a two-year unit because their experience indicates that much of the first year is spent getting acquainted with the situation. A policy of two-year advisor assignments would complicate selection but might enhance the contribution of effective advisors.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the unusual requirements of the assignment as advisor in Vietman it is suggested that selection procedures specific to this assignment be considered. Language, combat and mechanical skills can be taught if they are not already present. Utilizing personnel jackets, Officer Fitness Reports, reports of the officer's current commanding officer and the officer's own reports, it is proposed that prospective advisors be evaluated for their ability to face the 12 problems listed in Table 1. Uncorrected deficiency in any one of these may be considered grounds for not making the assignment.

In order to improve selection procedures an effort should be mounted to collect performance data on advisors in the field with respect to these 12 areas of activity and others which may be deemed important by American and Vietnamese officers in Vietman. As performance data become available, more rigorous selection techniques could be developed and differential weighting of predictors derived for the various independent criteria which emerge from the analysis of actual performance data.

TABLE 1

Problem-oriented selection strategies

Problem	Needed quality	Suggested selection technique	Possible training
1. Language	Speaking Vietnamese	Modern language aptitude test of present ability to speak Vietnamese	Intensive language training (12-16) weeks)
2. Skills in combat and self-defense in anti-guerilla operations	Infantry combat skills	Personnel jacket	Infantry-type training
3. Technical skills with RVN equipment	Knowledge about diesel engines and other RNV equipment	Personnel jacket	Special training on RVN ships, weapons, and communications gear
4. Leadership without authority to compel	Persuasive skills, ability to suggest and demonstrate	Personnel jacket (teaching experience)	Coaching in effective strategies, study of case reports of succsesful efforts
5. Isolation	Ability to work independently and find satisfaction in working alone	Personnel jacket (CO rating)	
6. Strange food	Ability to tolerate Vietnamese food	Self-report	Explanation of Vietnamese diet and experience with their staples
7. Excessive alcohol	Sobriety	Personnel jacket	
8. Racial intolerance	Acceptance of Vietnamese as worthy of respect as individuals	CO report, self report	
9. Unusual family responsibilities	Freedom from worries about sickness or breaking marriage	Self report	Counseling or delay of assignment

10. Need to maintain a responsible attitude in absence of usual incentives	Highly developed, self imposed sense of responsibility	Officer fitness reports	
11. Need for an interest in human factors in Vietnam	A concern for the Vietnamese and for the human factor in military affairs	Personnel jacket (Social science training as part of education).	
12. Widespread uncertainty about Vietnamization program	Sense of purpose about Vietnamization and belief RVN can make it	Self report	Careful exposition by senior officers of purpose of program and of appropriate policies in the field.

TABLE 2

Problem-oriented training strategies

(In each case an attempt is made to help the American learn the meaning to the Vietnamese of the behavior pattern which is disturbing to the American).

Problem	Possible content of special training
1. Uncertain loyalties of the Vietnamese	Vietnamese perspective of uncertainty about outcome and need to preserve options, strength of family ties, desire for power and opportunity for gain
2. Corruption of Vietnamese officials	Role of corruption in Vietnamese life and how it is seen by Vietnamese
3. Slowness of Vietnamese bureaucracy	Practices of RVN bureaucrats and factors which maintain those practices
4. Lethargy of counterparts	Differences in American and Vietnamese concepts of importance of various activities
5. Poor sanitation and other signs of poverty	Factors which prevent the Vietnamese from improving their standard of living.

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13. ABSTRACT
Criteria are suggested for selection from Navy officers in Vietnam those who might be assigned as advisors to the Vietnamese Navy. While satisfactory criteria of performance of earlier advisors have not been developed, research in the armed forces and in civilian agencies suggests a number of skills which are important. Where these skills are missing, some short-term training is suggested.

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