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## U.S. CIVILIAN ADVISORY EFFORT IN VIETNAM: U.S. OPERATIONS MISSION, 1954-1957 - CLASSIFIED & SUBJECT FILES OF THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE



This collection consists of unique records of the U.S. Operations Mission established to intervene in Vietnam-the country U.S. foreign policy deemed a lynchpin in the free world's fight against communism. The Classified & Subject Files of the Executive Office, document the myriad concerns and rationales that went into the control and direction of U.S. economic and technical assistance programs, as well as the coordination of mutual security activities, with respect to Vietnam.

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### Detailed Description:

*Source Note: RG469, Records of the U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948-1961, Mission to Vietnam, Office of the Director, Entry 1430: Subject Files, 1954-1957 [renamed Executive Office Unclassified Central Files]; and, Entry 1434: Classified Subject Files, 1954-1957.*

The American formula for government in free Vietnam rested on three legs. Independence was first and more important. It was necessary for France to treat South Vietnam as an independent sovereign nation and the U.S. would deal with it on that basis. The U.S. believed that full independence was the only way to win nationalist support away from the Viet Minh, and nationalist support was thought to be essential to successful government in South Vietnam. Secondly, the U.S. would urge Ngo Dinh Diem to establish a government of national union representative of dominant elements on the political scene. After bringing some stability to the nation, a Constituent Assembly would be called and a constitution drafted to herald the legal dethroning of Emperor Bao Dai and inauguration of democracy. Finally, the formula demanded firm French and U.S. support for Diem. Despite Diem's rigidity, his penchant for a one-man show and his inability to communicate or deal with people, he was a nationalist untainted by past association with either Viet Minh or French.<sup>1</sup>

America's economic policy for South Vietnam was designed to yield immediate political advantage, cope with the staggering distortion of Vietnamese economic life and ease France

out of economic affairs. U.S. planners believed integration of land reform measures with refugee resettlement "could fill a triple bill: surplus land distributed among the thousands of refugees would invite their political support, facilitate assimilation of Tonkinese with Cochinese and bring the land to full productivity." Aid would be given directly to Vietnam as befitting its independence and as a means to accelerate the "disassociation of France from (economic) levers of command." French domination in this area, it was thought, stifled Vietnamese-efforts and contradicted Vietnamese independence. It also inhibited American economic interests. Militarily, the U.S. would build up "indigenous military forces necessary for internal security... working through the French only insofar as necessary."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1, 2</sup> The Pentagon Papers, "IV. B. 3., The U.S. and France's Withdrawal from Vietnam, 1954-1956, Initial U.S. Policy Toward Indochina, U.S. Objectives in Vietnam: Political, Economic, Military."