

LANGUAGE TRAINING DETACHMENT
MACV TNG DIR AFLS
APO San Francisco 96222

~~REPORT~~
VIETNAM
101.69
Also, see update 6 May 72

SUBJECT: Duty Station Report

TO: Commandant, Defense Language Tng Institute, Lackland AFB, Texas

A. General

1. The Republic of Vietnam is a narrow, crescent-shaped strip of land along the southeastern tip of Asia. It is approximately 800 miles long. It is 130 miles wide at its widest portion and only 50 miles wide along its northern border. North Vietnam, called the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, is on the north, the South China Sea is on the east, and Cambodia and Laos is on the west. The border of Cambodia is very close to Saigon, the capital of the Republic of Vietnam.

2. The population of South Vietnam is approximately 16 million and increasing at the rate of about 2.8 percent annually. The ethnic Vietnamese have a recorded history of 2000 years. The educated elite of South Vietnam are almost entirely ethnic Vietnamese. While the Vietnamese have a strong sense of natural identity, their culture reveals many Chinese elements. Art forms the Vietnamese language, and their great respect they have for learning, the aged, and their ancestry show the influence of China. European elements and Indian cultures also have influenced the Vietnamese culture but to a much lesser degree. Vietnam has three large minority groups, the Chinese (over 1 million), the Montagnards (600,000), and the Cambodians (500,000). The religion of most of the 16 million South Vietnamese is a mixture of Mahayana, Bhuddhism, Taoism, Confucionism, and Anamistic practices. To a great extent, the religious practices of the Vietnamese are rather primitive. They believe in ghosts, astrology, hexing, etc. For example, one hears Vietnamese, even some educated in the United States, saying that they must consult their seer to find out when they should get married, build a house, take a trip, etc.

The Vietnamese do not seem reserved and formal such as the Japanese and Chinese. One can deal with them openly and frankly. They criticize one another openly, give orders without qualifications, and state opinions forcibly. Sometimes this frankness may be misinterpreted by Americans to mean that they do not get along with each other or do not get along with Americans.

3. Up to 939 AD Vietnam was a province of China. From that date, Vietnam managed to maintain its independence from China by paying regular tribute. The country divided during the 17th and 18th centuries and reunited in 1788. The country was named Vietnam in 1802. The French gained control of Vietnam in 1867. With the

exception of 4 years of Japanese domination, the French controlled Vietnam until 1954. In 1954 Vietnam was divided again by the Geneva Agreements. North Vietnam expected South Vietnam to collapse. When the Communist leaders in Hanoi realized that South Vietnam was making rapid progress, they began a campaign designed to overthrow the government of South Vietnam. These efforts have accelerated into the full scale military battles and maneuvers occurring at present.

4. The people of South Vietnam elect a President and a Vice President for four years. They also elect their congressman who serve in their Senate or in their House of Representatives. Their government also has a Prime Minister which is elected by Congress and which can be relieved of his duties by a two thirds majority of the Congress. The government has an executive branch, a legislative branch, and a judicial branch. While the government of Vietnam is separate from the military establishment of Vietnam, most of the high officials of the government are from the military. For example, President Nguyen Van Thieu was a Lt General in the Army, and Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky was Air Marshal of the VN Air Force.

5. Communist interference with normal marketing disrupts South Vietnam's economy. For example, rice which is usually exported, must be imported. South Vietnam, however exports rubber in spite of having most of its rubber plantations destroyed by the Viet Cong. South Vietnam receives about \$750 million in aid and technical assistance from the US, and 36 other free world countries, The United Nations also provides economic aid and/or technical assistance to Vietnam.

6. The climate is officially described as semi-tropical. The average rainfall is 78 inches per year. The weather is warm but a necktie can be worn comfortably during the day in Saigon. Coats are not worn during the day. Most night social functions are also attended without a coat. A sweater is sometimes necessary at night when in Dalat or Nha Trang. A raincoat and an umbrella can be of help during the rainy season.

7. The Vietnamese have had a long war and their social structure is giving away to the necessity for leaders and to the American influences. The result is that a great many of their officers are developed quickly. These officers are not educated in our sense of the word and do not know much that is specific-at most a few principles of leadership. This poses a danger to an advisor when he overestimates their ability and does not explain thoroughly.

B. General Living Conditions

1. Housing in Saigon is scarce. Good furnished apartments can be obtained within the living allowances or slightly higher (265-275 dollars per month). These apartments are air-conditioned,

have a refrigerator, and are cleaned daily. However, a person may have to live in a hotel for two or three months before getting such an apartment. No advance rent deposits are required. Several people could also rent a Villa for about 600-700 dollars per month. In this case utilities and maid service are extra expenses. The best way to solve housing problems is for the replacement to arrive the same day that the replaced person leaves.

At present, LTD is in an apartment building at 117 Le Thanh Ton. It's a 6 story apartment building and it should be the place where all LTD stay. For many reasons, living apart can be dangerous to an individual. Transportation is a problem and routine walking routes can be monitored by the VC. Also during an attack, it is preferable not to have people walking around the streets. Together, their supervisor can, at a moments notice tell them when to go or not to go to work or where to go if he gets special instructions.

2. Household effects are not shipped to Vietnam. It's probably best if the new arrival buys himself a small radio (20-30 dollars) and a small TV (80-130 dollars) sometime after he gets here. He can always sell them when he leaves at practically the same price he bought them. Local voltage is adequate for US electric and electronic equipment.

3. After 1 March, commissary privileges will not be available to US personnel who live near an Open Mess. This includes civilians and military. Since most do not have kitchens, commissary privileges are not significant. Food items such as peanuts, olives, marachino cherries, pearl onions and canned food stuff can be bought at the PX. Breakfast cost 32¢, lunch costs 50¢, and dinner costs 72¢ in the Open Mess. Local restaurants have a good (better than San Antonio) French and Chinese foods. Meals range from \$4.00 to \$35.00. US banks will not cash a check over \$50.00 unless one is a depositor at that bank. PX's will also cash \$50.00 checks when banks are not open. Saigon has dry cleaning facilities.

4. Since LTD personnel can not bring their families, no attempt has been made to locate educational facilities. None seem to be available.

5. US buses circle continually within Saigon permitting people to travel to any significant location. All personnel are permitted one week R&R to any of six locations, (Australia, Bangkok, Phillipines, Thailand, Taiwan, Japan or Malaysia). Transportation is free.

6. Civilian personnel can use US medical facilities. Civil Service personnel are charged one dollar each time they visit a doctor. This charge covers the medical consultation and prescription.

7. Curfew is normally at 2200 hours. Sometimes it is at 1900 hours. This limits social functions at night. Local community can not absorb all the US military and civilian personnel and, to a great extent, recreation of LTD will be within the US community. Social functions with the Vietnamese military personnel are frequent.

8. Some BOQ's serve good food at prices higher than field messes and offer movies as well as dance bands. They also have swimming pools, inexpensive bar service, and floor shows.

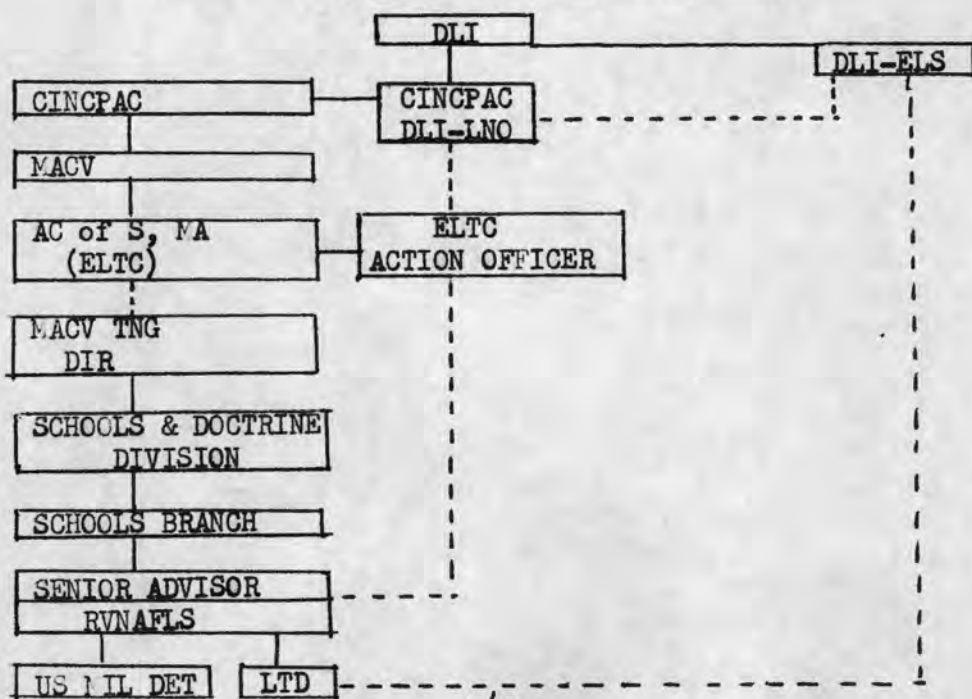
C. General Working Conditions

1. The School is in 4 locations and will soon obtain a fifth one. Students go to classes at Camp Tran Hung Dao (for Army offshore students), Royal Hotel (for Naval students), Dong Khanh Annex (for Air Force students), and Koepler Compound (for Air Force students). The school's headquarters is at Koepler Compound.

The school has a student population of about 4000 which is increasing. At present, the school has one 25 position laboratory and a 60 position laboratory at Koepler Compound. One 30 position and two 20 position laboratories should be arriving shortly. One hundred and fifty tape recorders have been ordered and 45 of these recorders have just arrived (in country). Three 30 position laboratories have been ordered for the new location.

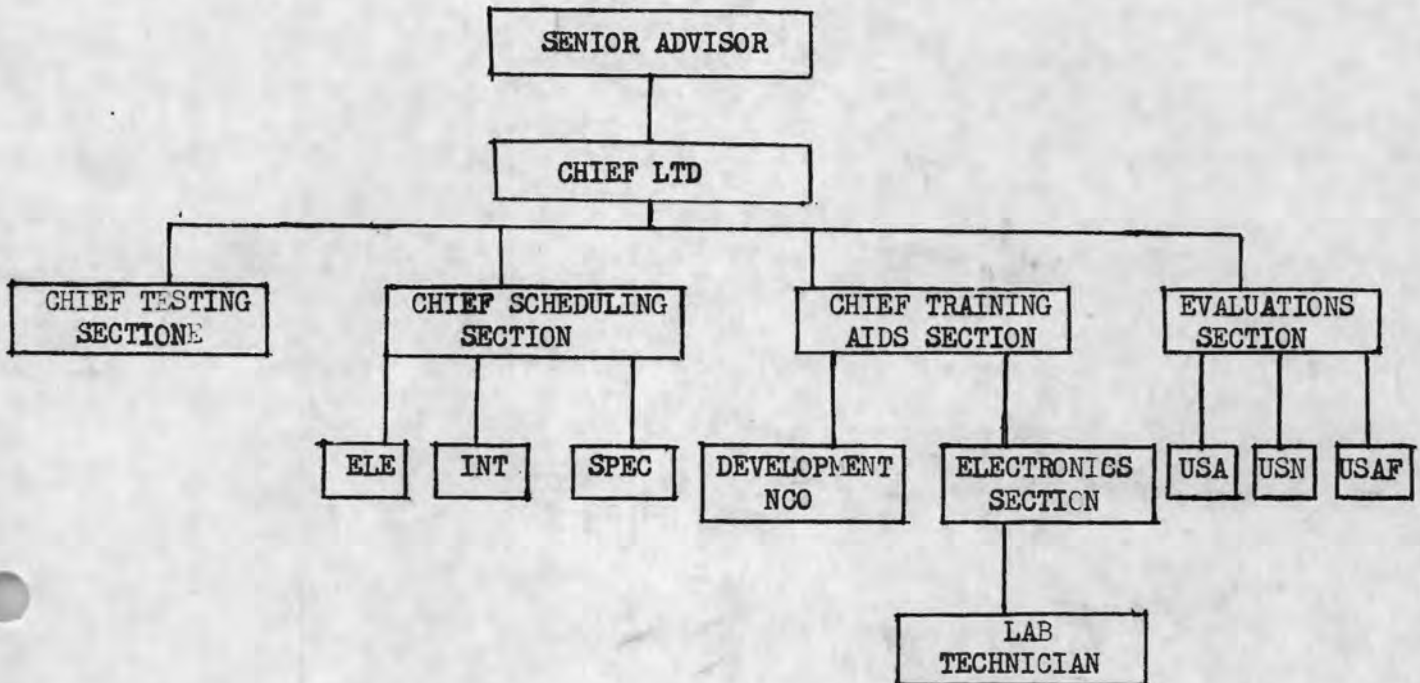
2. The commandant of the school is Major HUYNH-VINH-LAI and his counterpart is Major Robert Kee. The training officer is Major NGUYEN-THO-DAN and his counterpart is the LTD supervisor. The AFLS is run by the Vietnamese under their Central Training Command. The Americans are under the Training Directorate, MACV and perform advisory functions. The Training Directorate also supplies NCO's to serve as instructors in the AFLS. At present there are 400 NCO's assigned as instructors.

US ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIP



3. The GS-11 (LTD Supervisor) directs all testing, scheduling, training aids development, and evaluation. For this purpose, he has a large staff of senior NCO's who will work in academic areas until DLI personnel arrives. The chart below illustrates the academic organization of the RVNAFLS.

ACADEMIC STAFF ORGANIZATION CHART



The GS-9 civilian (at present only one) is principally responsible for preservice training and evaluation of instructors who are having problems. as illustrated on the academic organizational chart, GS-9's will work in specific areas as well as perform all duties prescribed in their official job description.

D. Miscellaneous

1. The new DLI arrival is received in the airport by the DLI supervisor of one of the GS-9's. A hotel reservation will have been made for him. He will be taken to his hotel, oriented on the most essential aspects and given that day and the next day off so that he can adjust from his trip and to the new time schedule in Saigon. On the third day he will be taken to the school, introduced to the senior advisor, school commandant, and all key personnel. He will be processed

at MACV administration where he will receive ID cards and ration cards necessary in Vietnam. He will also go and get a card entitling him to the privileges of ASSOCIATE membership in the Saigon Officer's Open Mess. Only these cards are valid in Saigon. He will use the third day and fourth day processing and visiting key people in the AFLS and at MACV.

Customs processing is done very quickly. Mainly, he must declare he is not carrying any forbidden articles, get his passport stamped, and convert his green money to military script or piasters. It is best that he arrive with about \$300.00 in green money or travelers checks. Personal checks can not be cashed over an amount of \$50.00.

It is best if LTD personnel are living, at least, within a block of each other. Close proximity permits quick communications in emergencies and facilitates transportation to and from work. If ETA of personnel can be predicted to within one week's accuracy, the LTD supervisor can try to get permanent quarters for incoming personnel. In such cases, the incoming personnel may have a weeks rent to pay for quarters in which he did not live e.g. he arrives a week late. If employee does not wish for the LTD supervisor to find him quarters a hotel reservation will be made for him. On arrival he will occupy these temporary quarters until he, with the LTD supervisor helping him as much as possible, can find permanent quarters.

2. Out-processing consists of getting the orders from DLI, shipping the hold baggage, and on DEROS, giving the LTD supervisor all the identification cards that he received on arriving in Saigon.

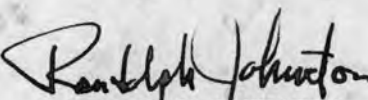
3. Personnel work abnormal hours. Eight hours overtime will be paid to one employee who will work on Saturday. Employee uses a week's leave for his authorized R&R. LTD supervisor signs his time and other force cards under the same CPO regulations as in the CONUS.

4. Personnel should bring any professional book that he has available. Check books should be brought but they will not be able to cash a personal check over \$50.00. Personal weapons are declared at customs. There has never been a case in Saigon where a personal weapon saved anyone's life. Having green money is prohibited in Saigon.

E. Do's and Don'ts

1. Americans should pay a fair price in the open markets of Saigon. One should never pay the price that one hears first. A taxi has no meter and the driver will not state the price of the trip. One should never pay more than 60-100 piasters for most trips. An extremely long trip should never be more than 100 piasters. Personnel should not travel in the pedicabs. The passenger in such vehicles sits unprotected in front of the driver. Also, some of these drivers belong to the VC infrastructure. Personnel should avoid large crowds and should not browse or shop in large groups. Walking downtown during daylight hours is as safe as walking downtown in San Antonio. Personnel should immedi-

ately go to a doctor on having any symptom such as an upset stomach, headache, slight fever, etc. These things can usually be corrected in one day, but, if delayed, can mean an air-evacuation to a CONUS hospital because the advanced illness can not be cured in a short period of time. Civilians should bring their drivers license if they want to get a military or civilian drivers license here. Suede shoes such as hush puppies are very common because the dampness tends to ruin good shoes, and the appearance of a good shoe is quickly ruined by walking through dust and mud. All standard items are available at the PX's but people who use special mouthwashes, special eye drops, special powders, etc, should bring a supply. Personnel should have their teeth cleaned before coming to Vietnam since dental care may not be available or the available dentist may not be as professionally qualified as the dentist in the states. Personnel should be in good health on arrival in Vietnam since a healthy body can quickly overcome the initial shock of a new time schedule, new foods, and new living conditions. Water from faucets is not potable and should be used for washing only. Americans should never interfere in civilina activities that might be seen in the street, especially arguments, impromptu meetings, police activities, etc. At present, police will arrest a girl that is walking with a foreigner. They will stop a vehicle that is carrying a Vietnamese girl. Of course, if the girl is legally married to the foreigner, she is not arrested. Traffic seems unorganized to a newcomer. Many people never understand that US traffic regulations are not applicable to the situation in Saigon. If one observes carefully, an understanding can be acquired on the Vietnamese traffic rules and driving can be as safe as in the United States. Driving becomes a problem when an American thinks that the Vietnamese think and act like they own the country.


RANDOLPH M JOHNSTON
DAC, GS-11
LTD Supervisor