PRELIMINARY REPORT
ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SCIENTIFIC CRIME DETECTION LABORATORY

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Vietnam Technical Assistance Project

31 August 1956

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Chief Advisor

HOWARD W. HOYT
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Police Program Division

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I. INTRODUCTION

The following report has been prepared at the conclusion of a consulting visit to Saigon, Viet Nam, at the request of MSUG-USOM, Police Team. It covers a period from June 30 - August 31, 1956. The consultant is Ralph F. Turner, Professor of Criminalistics, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan. The purpose of the visit was to observe the operation and administration of the criminalistics laboratory of the Vietnamese Bureau of Investigation (VBI), and make certain recommendations with regard to its future development. When arrangements for this visit were being discussed with Professors Weidner and Brandstatter of MSU, it was clearly understood that in view of the short duration of the visit, it was only expected that a preliminary survey would be made which would include recommendations for future action, and the possible preparation of a purchase order for basic laboratory equipment.

Scope of Report

The report is divided into sections which group the various activities into logical arrangements. These sections include: Current and Proposed Procedures, Physical Facilities, Coordination with Other Law Enforcement Agencies, Personnel Selection and Training, Suggested Phasing of Pro-
Methodology

Information for the preparation of this report was obtained through numerous personal interviews and visits to the criminalistics laboratory. Mr. Nguyen cong Chanh, Director of the Scientific Crime Laboratory in Saigon, and Mr. Pham van Hen, Assistant Director were most cooperative at all times. Mr. Vuong si Ky, of the MSU staff, served as interpreter at all meetings. Monthly reports, case reports and information from personal interviews were collected for incorporation in the report.

Definition of Terms

Certain terms used throughout the report are defined as follows:

Filippini Street: This term is used to designate the location of the present scientific crime detection laboratory, which also houses the existing identification bureau of the VBI and the Saigon-Cholon Police Department.

Camp des Mares: A recently acquired former French military installation, located in Saigon, which has been set aside for use by the VBI.

V.B.I.: Vietnamese Bureau of Investigation; also known as the Surete. This organization is comparable to the American
Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Civil Guard: Also known as the Guarde Civile. A National rural police organization, para-military in nature, performing law enforcement duties outside of the metropolitan areas.

Municipal Police: A conventional municipal or metropolitan police department. At this writing, the principal department is the one serving the Saigon-Cholon area.

Criminalistics Laboratory: A term gaining widespread international use which includes the various scientific techniques and disciplines used in the investigation and/or prosecution of criminal acts.

Identification Bureau: The division or bureau which provides the personal identification services for the law enforcement agency. This includes fingerprint files and accompanying index and/or personal description card files.

Photographic Bureau: The division or bureau which performs the photographic work for the department. This may include identification photos (mugs), crime scene photos, copy work and miscellaneous general photography.
II. CURRENT AND PROPOSED PROCEDURES

Examination of the current procedures as found in the Saigon Criminalistics Laboratory was divided into two parts: administration and operation. A review of the administrative procedure includes comments on personnel problems, although this subject is again discussed, with different emphasis, in the section on Personnel Selection and Training. The discussion of the operational procedure of the Filippini Street laboratory includes consideration of several questions which cannot be resolved at this date, inasmuch as the total reorganization of the VBI is not complete.

Administration

The present table of organization of the Filippini Street Laboratory, see Figure 1, shows an organizational system which is partially sound, yet is quite disorganized because of uncoordinated responsibilities and serious lack of trained personnel. It appears that the principle difficulty is brought about by a conglomeration of activities, some of which are overstaffed and others neglected. The table of organization also suggests that certain duties are given undue importance i.e. library, execution of tribunal requests, anthropometry, etc. Mr. Hōn, the Assistant Director, appears to have sufficient personnel
Figure 1
Organization chart of the Scientific Crime Laboratory, SAIGON.
with reasonable divisions of responsibility. The most serious deficiency occurs in Mr. Chanh's area of activity. As mentioned previously, he is burdened with administrative duties, in addition to performing most of the scientific examinations. Clarification of the importance of this problem is discussed in the following paragraph.

The primary responsibility of the Criminalistics Laboratory is:

1) to aid in the collection and preservation of physical evidence, as found at crime scenes and/or provide adequate instruction and equipment for the collection and transmittal of such evidence if it is gathered outside of the immediate domain of the laboratory.

2) to subject the evidence to careful scientific examination, as indicated by the nature of the evidence and the case under investigation.

3) to interpret the findings in a manner consistent with true scientific accuracy and integrity.

4) to ultimately present the results of the examination and interpretation to the investigator and/or the court, always being mindful of the fact that the results of a scientific examination are frequently given much weight by the court...yet never forgetting the paramount issue...the scientific findings are merely
one link in the chain of evidence, which may ultimately prove the guilt or innocence of the suspect or defendant.

This brief resume implies a number of considerations which bear, in part, on the administrative duties of the laboratory director.

1) If the Criminalistics Laboratory is enjoying the full cooperation of all participating law enforcement agencies and is functioning at or near full capacity, the director must supervise the activities of several scientists; each a specialist in at least one, and sometimes two specialties. A laboratory of the type envisaged for Viet-Nam will eventually have a sufficient case load to justify the employment of several specialists, all operating under proper scientific supervision. This does not only imply good organization and management techniques, but also scientific supervision in the sense that all work being reported out of the laboratory is of exceptionally high caliber with regard to technical accuracy and forensic usefulness.

Thus, the chief pitfall to avoid is the reliance upon one or two people who are expected to perform a widely diversified number of technical examinations. The so-called "generalist" forensic technician is very necessary and useful in the small department which cannot, and probably should not, attempt to justify a technical staff far
Beyond its case load or budget limitations. However, when the "generalist" is used, he always has access to a larger and better-staffed laboratory when the occasion demands.

Therefore, as mentioned previously, the director of the Viêt-Nam laboratory should be in a position to supervise a number of qualified technicians, administer the laboratory with a minimum of non-scientific distractions, and do forensic work in the area in which he is best qualified.

2) There should be a clear cut distinction between the administrative responsibilities of the Criminalistics Laboratory Director and those of the Identification Bureau Supervisor. This does not mean that the two bureaus should be widely separated in the table of organization, for there is a certain amount cooperative effort needed, but rather, it should be realized that the two operations, when conducted properly, are sufficiently large to demand the full time of a supervisor for each unit.

Figure 2 presents an organizational chart which is offered for consideration in a possible reorganization of the Viêt-Nam laboratory. The chart is presented in a very simple form, for at this writing, it is impossible to suggest a final plan. This difficulty is brought about by the fact that the final structure of the VBI has not been
resolved as yet, also, the fact that the eventual location of the laboratory has not been decided upon. It is felt, however, that this simple version can be adapted to whatever organizational form the V B I may take.

**Operation**

The current operation of the Filippini Street laboratory was observed personally, and evaluated from a study of case files and monthly reports. In addition to numerous personal visits to the laboratory at which time the routine activities were observed, several case files were obtained from Mr. Chanh. These were translated by Mr. Ky, of the MSU staff. Monthly reports of the Identification Service and Laboratory, covering a period from December 21, 1955 to June 20, 1956 inclusive, were also obtained and translated. General impressions are recorded as follows:

1) The volume of work reported by the Identification and Photographic sections appears to be reasonable and consistent with this consultant's limited impressions of the Saigon-Cholon police activity. It is suggested that statistical information relative to number of arrests and number of cases investigated by the Saigon-Cholon police and the V B I be supplied to the consultant. From these figures, it will be possible to suggest what might be a normal case load for the laboratory and photographic
Figure 2
Proposed organisation of Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory
sections. It will also provide insight into the nature of cooperation between these agencies, and also what the laboratory might do with respect to training within the various investigative bureaus of the two departments.

2) The volume of work reported by the Laboratory section appears to be unusually low, considering the size of the community and government which it should serve. This, undoubtedly, is caused by several factors:

a) Lack of trained personnel and equipment to carry on the expected functions.

b) Reliance upon the existing legal procedure, wherein the court requests certain scientific examinations only when it (the court) deems it necessary.

c) The apparent reluctance of investigating officers to submit physical evidence for examination on their own initiative.

d) The foregoing point "c" is further aggravated by the lack of adequate training in the value of scientific aids to criminal investigation in the various recruit and investigators courses. This work should ultimately be carried on by members of the laboratory staff.

3) Examination of individual case files
suggests that:

a) In the Firearms Identification area, the technicians are doing excellent work, considering the inadequacies of the equipment. This is to say that the method of identification photography followed by superimposing two separate photographs in juxtaposition, is an early and crude form of firearms identification. The quality of the work examined, however, was very good.

The workers are to be complimented on the fact that they are turning out excellent photographic exhibits with antiquated equipment.

b) Document Examination cases appeared to be basically adequate; however, can be expanded beyond their present level of technical excellence.

c) Chemical Analyses were very limited and pointed up sharply the need for a trained chemist, familiar with forensic techniques.

d) There were no examples of Comparative Micrography or Micro-Analyses, with the exception of two photomicrographs which were of average quality.

We were informed that most of the cases submitted originated in the Saigon-Cholon area, with very few coming from out-state localities. A small amount of work originates in other branches of government. It is envisaged that once the laboratory is fully operational, including
necessary equipment and qualified personnel, the case load should increase. It does not seem justifiable, however, to anticipate any substantial increase in the case load in the immediate future.
III. PHYSICAL FACILITIES

The present Criminalistics Laboratory is located at 27 Filippini Street, Saigon, Viet-Nam. It is a relatively large, two-story building; exterior views of which are shown in Figures 3-5 inclusive. The ground-floor of the building is occupied by the Identification Bureau. This includes a room for holding prisoners, anthropometrical measurements, photography of prisoners, taking of fingerprints, and classification and filing of the prints. These activities are illustrated in Figures 6-9 inclusive. Figure 10 shows a plan of the present ground-floor of the Filippini Street building.

The first floor is occupied by the present Criminalistics Laboratory. It contains a general chemistry laboratory, several small offices and laboratories, photographic darkrooms and a classroom. Figure 11 shows a floor plan of this floor, while Figures 12-17 inclusive illustrate some of the equipment.

It is sufficient to say that the facilities within the Criminalistics Laboratory are woefully inadequate. Equipment is antiquated, chemical supplies are of dubious quality, plumbing and electrical services are in need of overhaul and replacement, the gas supply is an interesting, hand-operated unit which may be put in the category
of a museum piece, and the photographic equipment is outmoded in addition to being patched up with remarkable ingenuity...however, it must be also stated that in spite of these limitations and lack of trained personnel, the present staff is doing a commendable job in certain areas.
FIG. 3
Exterior view of Filip­pini Street Laboratory.

FIG. 4
Exterior view of Filip­pini Street Laboratory.
**Fig. 5**

*Exterior view of Filip­pini Street Laboratory.*

**Fig. 6**

*Anthropometrical Mea­surement, Identification Bureau, Filip­pini Street Laboratory.*
FIG. 7
Anthropometrical Measurement, Identification Bureau, Filippini Street Laboratory.

FIG. 8
Taking fingerprints, Identification Bureau, Filippini Street Laboratory.
Fig. 9

A portion of the fingerprint files; Identification Bureau, Filippini Street Laboratory.
Figure 10
Existing Ground Floor Plan
Filippini Street Laboratory
NOTICE

Ground floor

1 Director deputy's bureau
2 Central card index
2-a Maintenance of alphabetic and fingerprint cards
2-b Personnel involved with the maintenance of
   alphabetic and fingerprint cards
   Anthropometrical measurements and fingerprint
3 Police records delivery
3-a Identity census of civil (honest)
3-b Identity census of criminals
3-c Waiting room for criminals
3-d Maintenance room of 524,000 negatives
3-e Printing room (for criminals)
3-f Shooting room (photos)
3-g Cameras storage and photographic preparations
4 Stair
5 Passage reserved for office boy's desk
6 Criminals' entry
7 Gas apparatus "Héliogène"
8 Water pump and water tank

Figure 10-a
Key to Floor Plan Shown in Figure 10.
Figure 11
Existing first floor plan,
Filippini Street Laboratory.
NOTICE

First floor

1-a Director's office
1-b Library
2-a Supply bureau (carbon, paper, etc...)
2-b Director's secretary

Technical police

3 Bureau of fingerprint and research of stains
3-a Printing room
3-b Projector
3-c Big camera equipped with printing frame
3-d Blood stains and spermatozoons test
3-e Marsh machine
3-f Bureau of research of poisons, equipped with water pipes, gas pipes and wall shelves holding chemicals
3-g Pump, centrifugal, still, autoclave
3-h Anthropometry (class-room)
3-i Chemicals storage
3-j Maintenance room of viscera for re-test, equipped with airing holes

4 Rooms reserved for personnel lodging

5 Water tank supplying water to the 2 photos offices and the bureau of research of poisons

water pipe
NOTICE (continued)

- gas pipe
+ tap
o gas burner
= table paved with faience squares

Figure 11-a

Key to Floor Plan Shown in Figure 11.
Fig. 12
Gas Generating Apparatus; Filippini Street Laboratory.

Fig. 13
Portion of photographic equipment; Filippini Street Laboratory.
Copy camera; Filippini Street Laboratory.

View of Print Room. Photographic Dark Room; Filippini Street Laboratory.
FIG. 16

View of a Dark Room; Filippini Street Laboratory.

FIG. 17

Negative File Room; Filippini Street Laboratory.
Recommendations

At this date the matter of recommending a plan for the establishment of a new Criminalistics Laboratory present several problems which have not been completely resolved. In view of this situation, alternate proposals are being advanced with the thought in mind that workable features of the various suggestions can ultimately be incorporated in the final recommendations.

The problems, as they presently appear, are as follows:

1) Location of the Criminalistics Laboratory, whether it shall be at Camp des Mares or remain at Filippini Street.

2) Extent of remodeling and renovation of either of the above sites. This problem is discussed more fully in Section VI covering Phasing of the Program.

3) Responsibilities of the laboratory as eventually outlined in the reorganization of the V.B.I. This involves the matter of relationship between the laboratory, photographic unit, identification bureau and services to be performed for the Saigon-Cholon Police Department.

In Memo No. 4 dated July 20, 1956 (see Figure 18) certain preliminary suggestions were advanced for the establishment of the laboratory at Camp des Mares. This involved utilization of one of the existing buildings immediat-
ely adjacent to one which has been designated as the new Central Record Bureau for the V.B.I. This proposed laboratory building is limited in size and would only provide work space for the Criminalistics Section. Photographic and identification work would have to be done in another building.

Figure 18 shows a suggested plan for utilizing the Camp des Mares location. It was prepared with minimum structural alterations and costs as a goal.

The advantages of this location are:

a) close proximity to the Central Record and Identification Bureau;

b) accessibility of the laboratory to all units of the V.B.I.;

c) ease with which the laboratory staff can be used for training and liaison work with all members of the V.B.I.;

The disadvantages are:

a) location is not ideally suited for use of the laboratory by the courts;

b) the quarters are minimum and do not provide room for expansion; once the laboratory is operating at anticipated potential it undoubtedly would be very cramped;

c) the structure is not suitable for the eventual installation of precision instruments, i.e., spectograph, etc.;
d) there is no space for the development of a museum and reference files.

If the laboratory is to be retained at Filippini Street, several general, and rather sweeping suggestions are in order:

1. The entire building be given over to the Criminalistics Laboratory. This amount of floor space may appear extravagant at this time, however, it will not be so if the laboratory is eventually serving all of Viet Nam law enforcement agencies in a proper manner.

2. The building be inspected for structural soundness, renovation of all plumbing and electrical services and planning for air conditioning of certain laboratories.

3. Removal of the Identification Bureau and all of its activities from Filippini Street.

Figure 19 shows a suggested utilization of the Filippini Street building for a Criminalistics Laboratory. The outline is preliminary in nature and, naturally, is subject to revision; however, it does suggest the type of planning which should be considered if a building of the size of the Filippini Street one is to be used.

The advantages of the Filippini Street location are:

a) proximity to the courts;

b) structurally superior to the Camp des Mares location;

c) adequate size for expansion, and if used
Figure 18
Proposed Floor Plan for Laboratory Site at Camp des Mares

Scale: 1cm = 5 feet
3. Turner
properly, should be able to meet all of the needs of the various law enforcement agencies.

The disadvantages are:

a) separation from Camp des Mares;

b) total cost for adequate remodeling;

c) loss of laboratory work space while remodeling is in progress; this objection could be overcome, however, by shifting the laboratory temporarily to Camp des Mares, using the plan originally suggested for this location.

A third alternative is to find a building at Camp des Mares which is comparable to Filippini Street and establish the laboratory in these quarters. This would undoubtedly be the most satisfactory arrangement for long time operation. If such a building cannot be found, the obvious ideal solution would be the construction of a new building designed exclusively for use as a Criminalistics Laboratory.
Figure 19
Proposed Floor Plan (Ground floor)
Filippini Street
(Area enclosed in dotted lines to be air conditioned)

- Utilities
  Distilled water
  Gas
  Electricity

- Chemistry

- Questioned documents

- Fire arms identification

- Microscopy

- Storage

- Darkroom

- Photo studio

- Special instruments

- Shop

- Photo supplies and files

- Special instruments
Figure 10-a
Proposed Floor Plan (First Floor);
Filippini Street Laboratory.
IV. COORDINATION WITH OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

An important factor in the success of a Criminalistics Laboratory is its rapport with the law enforcement agencies which it serves. With very few exceptions, the laboratory does not initiate a criminal investigation. Physical evidence is usually brought to the laboratory, or staff members are called to a crime scene by investigating officers. Thus, it is readily apparent that the services which the laboratory can render to the investigating agencies are dependent upon the relationship between the laboratory and the field investigators.

It is therefore suggested that an information and education program be initiated wherein members of the laboratory staff will be included in the training courses, both basic and advanced, for members of the V.B.I., Garde Civile, and metropolitan police officers. Such scheduling, of course, must be worked out by the Chief Training Officer. This type of instruction and information should not, however, be utilized in classes which are not for investigative officers, i.e. para-military groups. The level of instruction should not be too complicated or beyond the comprehension of the students. In general, the lectures should cover the following points:

1) What types of service can be rendered by the laboratory:
a. Firearms identification
b. Document examination
c. Chemical analyses
d. Micro analyses

2) What are the limitations of the laboratory.
3) How can the laboratory be contacted for assistance.
4) Detailed instructions for collection and preservation of evidence.
5) Instruction for transmittal of physical evidence to the laboratory.
6) Instruction for preparation of letter of transmittal which accompanies evidence, including requests for specific examinations.
7) Explanation of significance of laboratory report and subsequent testimony in court.

In addition to the above type of information and education, the laboratory should develop a field staff, or mobile unit which can contact the various law enforcement agencies and assist them in field investigations.
V. PERSONNEL SELECTION AND TRAINING

The most important factor in the administration and operation of the Criminalistics Laboratory is the quality of its personnel. While it is true that certain physical facilities are necessary, it is more important to secure well trained technicians who can not only utilize fine instruments and equipment, but also, can do creditable work with basic scientific tools. A common fault is to put expensive and complicated equipment in the hands of untrained technicians, in the hope that by some mysterious process meaningful results will be forthcoming.

It is quite difficult to state precisely the number of trained technicians which will ultimately be needed in the Criminalistics Laboratory, however, the number may be someplace between 5 and 20. The minimum requirements may be described as follows:

1. Supervisor
2. Chemist
3. Document examiner
4. Firearms identification technician
5. Micro-analyst
6. Latent fingerprint technician
7. Photographer

The ideal minimum educational requirements for these
technicians should be as follows:

The Supervisor, chemist and micro-analyst should be graduates of a college or university with degrees in the physical or natural sciences. Graduate degrees with additional specialization is, of course, desirable. The document examiner, firearms identification expert, fingerprint expert and photographer should have a minimum of high school education, several years experience in their respective fields, and have received intensive specialized training in their particular specialty from recognized experts.

In view of existing conditions in Viêt-Nam, readers of this report may be inclined to regard these minimum requirements as unrealistic; however, they have been included for the purpose of establishing a long range goal. Attention is also called to the existence of a four year college type program, which is administered jointly by the University of Indonesia and the Indonesian National Police, which seems to be producing a high caliber police officer, some of whom have filled positions in the Criminalistics Laboratory. During a field trip to Djakarta, this consultant had an opportunity to examine the curriculum of the Indonesian National Police University and was quite favorably impressed. He has also had two graduates of
the University studying criminalistics at Michigan State University during the period 1954-55.

This foregoing information is included in this report merely to suggest that while circumstances in Việt-Nam are presently not favorable for launching an elaborate educational program in the police field, the idea is not beyond the realm of possibility if one wishes to draw a parallel with accomplishments in Indonesia.

However, in an attempt to present suggestions which may be of immediate benefit, the following program is offered:

Vietnamese law enforcement authorities must accept the fact that a minimum of 4 to 6 years of university training, following a high school education is necessary to produce a nucleus of qualified criminalists. This does not mean that all laboratory personnel have to have this extensive training. Consequently, plans should be formulated immediately for the selection of such people, who are capable of coping with this type of training. Basic science training may be initiated at the local university, with additional specialized training taken abroad.

Presently, one VBI employee has been selected for specialized criminalistics training at Michigan State University. He has had no previous university training;
However, has had some practical experience in a chemistry laboratory. Every effort will be made to give this student as much usable and practical training as possible; however, it is understandable that this effort will have many short-comings. In view of the anticipated expansion of the Criminalistics Laboratory, it is urged that the VBI, with the assistance of the MSU Group, begin immediately to comb the ranks of the VBI for several candidates who may be considered for Stateside training during 1957-58. These people should have an elementary and secondary education and one or more years of university science training. Arrangements should be made for English language instruction to continue for 6 to 10 months, prior to coming to the States. This does not have to be a concentrated type course. It can be supplemented with selected reading programs prepared by the MSU Police Administration staff at East Lansing. If thought desirable, the East Lansing staff could prepare a simple screening examination which could be administered in Saigon to help select the most qualified participants. With proper application, it does not seem unrealistic to expect to have a small group of possible candidates assembled for final selection by June 1957.

In the event that the above recommendations cannot be carried out because of the difficulty in finding suit-
able candidates within the VBI ranks, law enforcement administrators should then be urged to consider the possibility of employing people who may not necessarily have law enforcement experience, but who do have the basic educational background; are interested in pursuing a career in criminalistics; and could be employed at a reasonable salary.

In addition to specialized training at the university level in police administration and criminalistics, plans should be made to send participants to the States for short course, intensive instruction in photography, firearms identification and document examination. Photographic instruction can be obtained through the Eastman Kodak Company, at their special Law Enforcement Photography course held periodically in Rochester, New York. Instruction in firearms identification and document examination would have to be arranged on an individual basis with selected agencies. Participants contemplated for this type of training should also have elementary and secondary education, good understanding of English, and a genuine interest in their particular field, accompanied by some practical experience, if possible.

Thus far, this report has commented on a variety of problems concerning the development of the Criminalistics Laboratory. Some are of a long range nature; others of
immediate urgency. It is not anticipated that any immediate changes will be forthcoming; however, certain preparations should be made for eventual implementation of some of the anticipated changes. The following proposal is offered with the above thought in mind.

Assuming that Mr. Chanh, the present Director of the Laboratory, will remain in this position, it would seem advisable for him to come to the States for a brief visit. Previous personal experience with such visitors indicates that the most benefits could be obtained in the shortest time and with minimum expense, if Mr. Chanh were sent to Michigan State and then taken on a short conducted visit to a few carefully selected forensic laboratories. If he were accompanied by a person familiar with both the U.S. laboratories and the problems in Saigon, maximum time could be spent on introducing Mr. Chanh to the techniques and administrative procedures, which would be most useful to him on his return to Viêt-Nam. In the past, we have felt that much time and money has been wasted on indiscriminate and casual visitation; whereas, much more could be accomplished if a definite objective has been set up for each site visited. With a carefully prepared itinerary, such a visit could be accomplished in two weeks or less time in the States.