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NOTES ON SRI's COUNTERINSURGENCY

April 28, 1969

Charles Anderson, SRI President, has been quoted by The Stanford Daily as saying, "There is no 'counterinsurgency' program by that name here at SRI. That's merely an obscure categorization."

We would agree with Mr. Anderson that counterinsurgency, a burgeoning research field, reaches into so many different areas of social science and technology that it will take intense study, with full access to contract information, to identify all the work that falls under this heading. It is a task that we at Stanford, together with the SRI staff, must begin as soon as possible.

But for the present, there is a distinct Southeast Asian counterinsurgency program at SRI that we can identify and deal with. This program centers around the Regional Security Study Center (RSSC), but is by no means limited to it.

RSSC has offices at SRI's Hanover street building in the Stanford Industrial Park, and at Bangkok, Thailand. Its unique, interdisciplinary mission has been described by Russell F. Rhyne, ^{then} senior operations analyst with SRI. Writing in the June, 1964 Military Review (Operations Research and Counterinsurgency, pp. 26-34), Mr. Rhyne explains that the "job" of counterinsurgency research is a challenging one. He goes on:

What is needed to do the job is to draw together a team whose skills include military operations research, weapons technology, the economics of technologically underdeveloped areas, sociology, and cultural anthropology. Constant liason with active staff work by responsible military, economic and political agencies should provide the primary source of political and tactical insights. (p. 32)

Such is the rationale for RSSC. Eight 1968 project titles from the RSSC are given on p. 45 of the SRI Study Committee report. Examples: "Elements of Capability and a Scenario for a Possible Conflict Situation in Southern Thailand," and "Insurgency in Northeastern Thailand and Smuggling and Illegal Entry Across the Mekong River Border." These explicit descriptions leave no doubt that RSSC research is intended to reinforce and broaden the U.S. military presence in Thailand.

Since we ask for the dissolution of the RSSC and reassignment of its

staff, it is important to examine that staff's size and make-up. Using an August, 1968 SRI telephone directory (obtained with some difficulty), we found 38 employees identified with the RSSC. Of them, 21 are located in Bangkok, and 17 at Hanover street. Were the RSSC to be disbanded, there would be little danger of prolonged unemployment for this staff. Of the 38, 29 hold professional titles (senior operations analyst, system analyst, programmer, research analyst, etc.) The skills of these men in mathematical analysis are in tremendous demand for socially constructive research at home.

Moreover, SRI itself has argued persuasively that operations research teams can be readily shifted to non-military problem solving. As a case in point, the work of the RSSC appears to overlap with a special program which SRI calls RSI--"Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Intelligence." Descriptive literature on the RSI program touts the same professional skills that we find at RSSC: "research engineers, system and operations analysts, and mathematicians." And the same literature emphasizes that RSI techniques "have direct application to non-military problem areas such as urban planning, natural resource inventories, environmental control and agriculture." Furthermore, SRI points with pride to the past application of RSI research to "the isolation and identification of natural and man-made sources of water pollution in various parts of California."

If the operations research experts at RSI can do peaceful research, so can the staff of the RSSC. By design or by chance, our SRI affiliate has directed these men into research which increases the likelihood of more Vietnams around the world. But we have SRI's own testimony that there is a more constructive research alternative.

In summary, we believe that SRI should do more than simply disengage itself from counterinsurgency contracts, and allow the U.S. Government or some private firm to take over the same contracts and the same personnel. The RSSC, for instance, should not merely change ownership. It should cease to exist. All SRI counterinsurgency contracts should be terminated, not merely sloughed off. Perhaps some SRI staff will quit so they can continue counterinsurgency research. But we believe SRI--with Stanford's help--can allow these professionals to switch their operations research to peaceful applications.

The April 3rd Movement