

THE BIGGEST ITEM under "wasted funds" for the United States Agency for International Development (AID) is alcoholism.

A recent memorandum supposedly for in-house circulation tells of a staggering estimated US\$1.2 million annually that it costs the agency due to absenteeism, poor performance and other side effects due to alcoholism among employees abroad.

AID's biggest problem area for hard-drinking officers: Asia.

The AID memo, as well as earlier studies, gives no reasons to explain why so many alcoholics turn up or are developed in the Asia region.

AID estimates some 80% of the drunks on its payroll are now posted in Asia!

A new directive by AID Administrator Dr. JOHN HANNAH spells out what the agency will do this year to combat the problem:

---First, a total of US\$30,000 has been budgeted for the year for a program to combat alcoholism (think of what that money could do for a hospital in Laos or a self-help program in upper Burma!).

---Second, because AID counts alcoholism as a treatable affliction, those employees who cooperate will be given time off for treatment.

---The estimate generally accepted is that half of the alcoholics can be reformed completely; put another way, the program figures it can cut the US\$1.2 million loss in half during 1973.

That means that the AID goal for 1973 will be to waste only US\$600,000 rather than US\$1.2 million, due to alcoholism.

A study currently underway by the Asia section of AID is trying to determine the relationship between low cost of liquor at post exchanges and clubs and the high incidence of alcoholism among officers posted in Asia.

Climatic effects on heavy drinking are also part of the study.

A U.S. Government Accounting Office (GAO) study last year said that there was a minimum 4% alcoholism rate among federal employees at any one time.

Again, the rate for government employees posted in Asia was by far the highest; much higher than 4%.

Even the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has its problems in this regard.

[REDACTED] whose job is to dry-out sloshed government officers.

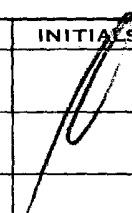
This particular "farm" claims that more than half of its graduates stay on the wagon.

For the first time, some Asian governments on the receiving end of AID grants and technical help are requesting that any known alcoholics among American technicians be sent home immediately for treatment or otherwise transferred.

"It's about time something was done about this problem," Hannah said in his directive.

We'll drink to that!

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