Of course, acquaintance with the nature of excess stock does not solve the whole problem, or even the largest part of it. Given both a general knowledge of the excess property potential and a high degree of willingness to utilize it, Bureau of the Far East field personnel face a difficult problem in learning about specific excess availabilities. The twenty-five copies of 608 catalogs that Saigon Mission receives certainly cannot provide all who might profitably examine them the opportunity to do so. At present, only favored personnel can be afforded that chance. Moreover, mere access to catalogs is not enough; the access must be timely, else whatever items are selected may well have been preempted by other claimants.

c. *Excess Property Lead Times.*—Over the past few years, a number of complaints about slow deliveries of excess stock have been made by the Far East Mission to AID/W. Research of excess property lead times indicated nothing conclusive can be stated—either absolutely or relatively to lead times for new procurement. Outcomes vary widely from case to case, depending upon such factors as: whether the item is obtained under the Advance Acquisition or Direct Acquisition programs; whether an item is ready for issue or requires rehabilitation; and whether shipping space can be obtained, especially if the item is being shipped under special, space-available rates. In general, it would appear that

exceeds 100 percent of the reported utilization. Equally, no doubt, there are instances where the savings are negative, where the outlay for the excess exceeds its market value or—far more important—its value to the ultimate user.

Such savings, positive or negative, cannot be evaluated other than on a case-by-case basis. No universally applicable cost/benefit formula exists for their measurement, nor can one be easily devised. The insufficiency of catalog descriptions of the condition of items aggravates the problem; but the problem would still exist, even if the condition of every item were fully and accurately known in advance of ordering it.

What matters, of course, is value of the item of excess to the end user, and that value has nothing to do with cost. Where the item of excess under consideration is precisely the same as the given new item and is in the same condition as the new item, the value of the excess item to the user is exactly the same as the value of the new one. And, if the excess item is available and the new one would otherwise have to be procured, the savings are clearly real savings. However, the actual decisions are seldom that clear-cut. The substitute excess may not be exactly the same as whatever new item would be selected; for example, the item may be gasoline-engine driven instead of diesel-engine driven. And even if the excess item is precisely the same as what would be ordered new, its condition probably is not the same. Certainly, if the item is an equipment item, the odds are astronomical against its condition being the same as that of a new item. Here, relative values will turn on several factors, but most notably on the intensity and the duration of its past and on its projected use.

Making sound cost/benefit comparisons of new versus excess equipments is peculiarly difficult in Vietnam, because of the maintenance situation there. Research indicates the life of an equipment item in Vietnam tends to end with its first breakdown.[15]