

W. Permal file

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

6 March 1967

Dear Oggie,

Thanks for your letter of February 25. I showed it to Komer, and he was pleased, but then in on top of it came Saigon's 19524 saying that present resources were "sufficient for foreseeable future." This of course does not jibe with your letter, and even more importantly, with the reports we got from people in the field during our visit last month. Without going into specifics--which you know far better than I--I should emphasize that Komer heard from many people, both MACV and OCO, that more money, more housing, more psyops support were needed for Chieu Hoi, and on that basis he sent forward his blanket offer of support. Now, in a week in which over 1,000 VC rallied, you tell us you don't need more resources. If this is true, you know how happy it will make everyone here. But if there is any little item--costing, say, only a few million dollars--which we can kick in to increase the returnee rate, or take care of them better once they have rallied, better let us know (even if this will raise the cost of the returnee from last year's \$125.12).

I am puzzled by the cable. I understand that you "cannot be sure of result" of effort to maintain "present considerable flow." That's fair enough. But that was not the point, entirely. There is more that needs to be done even if flow were to drop off, isn't there?

If this cable is not your doing, but forced upon you by someone in your chain of command who doesn't want to ask Washington for anything, let me know on a frank and informal basis, and without endangering you we will try to do something about it--because the stakes are just too high to fool around anymore.

It was great seeing you, and I hope that things are okay. I know that Len and others there are all in your corner, and I am convinced that some of the problems you describe are not as serious as they appear.

Mr. Ogden Williams
American Embassy
Saigon, Vietnam

By the way, what about an American full-time on Chieu Hoi in places like Binh Dinh and Phu Yen? Are you strongly opposed to this as a slap at the Filipinos, or would it be useful? I am concerned that we make sure that the returnees are really returnees, not refugees; and that if they are returnees we are finding out why they are leaving the VC in such droves (beyond the obvious reason of military pressure) so we can try to duplicate the flow elsewhere.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dick Holbrooke', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dick Holbrooke