

Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, CORDS

MACCORDS-CH

26 August 1967

Mr. Richard Holbrooke
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Dick:

I apologize for not having acknowledged earlier your last letter. This reply will attempt to bring you up to date on the Chieu Hoi Program as of now. I enclose a copy of the short briefing which I will be giving Westmoreland tomorrow, plus the slides that go with it which are attached to the back. I will also send you shortly our progress report on Project TAKEOFF.

The returnee rate is holding up rather better than I thought it would, with 519 last week. Present projections would put us out at about 35,000 by the end of 1967, with a possible bonus if increased military activity or the general year-end cyclical rise give us a helping hand this year. On the other hand, I am also very concerned about the program because of the instability which is increasing on the GVN side. The latest rumor is that Vinh Loac will take over MICH. If he does, will Anh be retained? If he is retained, will he be allowed the same freedom of action enjoyed under Tri? There is at least a 50% chance that if Vinh Loac takes office, scores of Chieu Hoi personnel will be replaced by new ones as political payoffs and, in short, the momentum of the program could easily be set back at least six months, if not longer. If we could be assured an absence of administrative disturbance, we could really have this program humming by the end of 1967. Already it is increasingly spoken of by Province Reps as being the best program in their provinces.

Another factor for good or evil will, of course, be the elections and the overall political situation in Vietnam from here on out until the end of the year.

On the bureaucratic side, we continue to receive maximum support from Komer, Knowlton and others, and the priority of Chieu Hoi is increasingly recognized throughout the military establishment as people look for "good news." On the other hand, the "anschluss" with MACV has embroiled us in a mass amount of paper work, preparing briefings,

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writing reports, and so forth. It is leading us further away from reality in Vietnam. I remember years ago the Vietnamese telling me that this was a "captains and majors" war and the U.S. is trying to fight it with ~~a~~ general. Since then, the advent of the North Vietnamese does change the picture, but at the operating level the message still holds good.

We have already placed eight Honolulu graduates in the field with two more coming in September, and I have asked for eleven more in October, or as soon as possible. This means we are reducing the slots in our ECCOI contract from 45 to 36, which will result in our program's being divided between Filipino and U.S. personnel. Generally, most Americans do not have the patience to work with Chieu Hoi Chiefs in the mundane province of the Centers, but I am requesting a maximum of young Peace Corps personnel whose attitude will be more like that of Holbrooke in 1962-1963.

I still expect to return to the United States in January 1968, turning over this operation to Paul Neilson. I hope to be able to work out some arrangement whereby I can spend a year improving my Spanish-language capability and studying some economics in a fairly relaxed program. Len Maynard has also mentioned something about the Vietnam training course in PSI.

I will not bore you with my views on Vietnam. It does seem that we must accelerate the revolutionary process (I do not mean the RD Program) or we will be here for too long. People like Westmoreland and Ambassador Bunker will, in my view, have to take more stronger stands than heretofore in opposing some of the anomalies which exist on the Vietnamese side, one among which is the entrenched system of corruption stemming from Corps Commanders down to Province and District Chiefs. Before leaving here, I will resume to write one serious paper on the overall situation in Vietnam for Komer and Bunker.

Please keep in touch and many thanks for your assistance. With best regards.

Sincerely,

OGDEN WILLIAMS
Chief, Chieu Hoi Division, CORDS