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FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

December 11, 1969

Honorable William E. Colby
Deputy COMUSMACV for CORDS
c/o American Embassy
Saigon, Viet-Nam

Dear Bill:

- CONFIDENTIAL

Many thanks for your letter of November 22 enclosing a copy of the 1970 Pacification Plan. I wish to acknowledge your letter before I have had a chance to read and study every word in this plan. My reaction to it to date is very favorable, and I particularly note much frank talk about the "meaning of security" (page I-1-2), the ultimate transition from civilian to military control (page 12) and the plans for withdrawal of U.S. forces. It is also very reassuring that the unclassified annexes will get down to village level. I did notice what may be an area of ambiguity in the comparison between the duties of the Sub-Sector Commander (page I-6), where he "assists the Village Chief" and the flat statement that the popular forces are "under the direction and control of the Village Chief" (page I-4), on the one hand, with the Tab C chart on page I-1-C-1 where the line from District Chief to Village Chief is one of clear command and control, etc. In Viet-Nam one must wonder whether such things are "Freudian slips!"

The 1970 Pacification Plan addresses itself to certain aspects of the Viet-Nam problem, and one may hope that our present progress will continue. I am frankly more concerned about other areas to which the plan does not directly address itself, but which may nevertheless determine the ultimate outcome of our foreign policy initiatives in Viet-Nam. In this connection, I note with great interest the report received from the Vung-Tau Training Center concerning comments of village and hamlet officials. Rip Robertson disseminates this report to a very closely held group, and I give it no further dissemination at this school or here in Washington. I do not disseminate it at the school because I do not wish to discourage students who are already too prone to be pessimistic about Viet-Nam and our involvement there. Nevertheless, the Vung-Tau report raises questions which cannot be avoided in the area of basic GVN attitudes. Such ancient problems as the attitudes of GVN officials towards the people, and particularly the actions of the Vietnamese security forces, continue to be troubling. Again, within the last two weeks Vietnamese politicians visiting in the United

States have expressed to me their concern about matters which are so fundamental and age-old that we almost forget they still exist. For example, the Vietnamese army is commanded at the top by men who fought for the French against the Vietnamese, and how can such men effectively lead a national army against the Viet Cong/NVA? Minister An used to inveigh on the same theme. Again, everyone has recognized for more than a decade the inadequacies of junior officer leadership in the ARVN. It has been known that one cause of poor officer leadership was the failure to make more battlefield promotions and to commission people whose merits were fighting ability rather than membership in the urban bourgeoisie and possession of school diplomas. Have we really faced up to this problem? Is the GVN broadening or narrowing its political base (with particular reference to the new cabinet), etc.

These examples, and a hundred more with which you are familiar, would seem to derive from entrenched attitudes of the Vietnamese on whom ultimate success or failure must depend. What is the American side doing to attack these problems at their source, because if we are not doing enough or do not succeed, we may well lose in the long run despite our progress in the pacification area.

This letter is too long and too rambling, but I suppose I am disturbed by the juxtaposition of an excellent planning document which shows great progress, on the one hand, and a series of continuing attitudinal and personnel problems on the GVN side on the other. It would be refreshing to see more evidence that the GVN leopard, and notably the ARVN leopard, is changing its spots.

With best regards,

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Ogden Williams
Coordinator
Viet-Nam Training Center

P.S. I had great fun a few weeks ago when I addressed a group of Georgetown students concerning Viet-Nam. One handsome, long-haired young man of probing mind turned out to be your son. We all had wine and cheese afterwards in a student house and had a splendid exchange of views. I enjoyed it thoroughly and hope they did too.

O.W.