

FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

July 18, 1969

Mr. Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Professor Kissinger:

I returned recently from Saigon and would venture to pass along an idea that might be interesting from a political standpoint and otherwise.

To be brief, I think the time has come to abolish the term "advisor" as applied to most American civilian and military personnel who go to Viet-Nam for one reason or another. Years ago, when the Vietnamese Army was in its infancy and when President Diem needed basic technical assistance in establishing new institutions, the term "advisor" had a certain justification. In more recent years, it has been both insulting to the Vietnamese and fatuous on our own part to keep on ascribing the term "advisor" to any young American who goes to Viet-Nam ostensibly to advise a Vietnamese official who in fact may be his senior in age and of vastly greater experience in Vietnamese affairs.

Since we are now trying to "Vietnamize" the war, I think it would be a meaningful gesture to direct that the routine American "advisors" be known as liaison officers, or U.S. representatives, or the like. This would not only be psychologically meaningful to the Vietnamese, but would also reinforce our stated position that we are turning increasing responsibility over to the Vietnamese, responsibility which they are increasingly willing and able to bear. The posture of the more independent Viet-Nam would be enhanced by our discontinuance of a practice which has been demeaning to the Vietnamese and self-deluding on our own side.

At the moment I am serving as head of the Viet-Nam Training Center within the Foreign Service Institute. This Center attempts to prepare "advisors" to serve in CORDS throughout Viet-Nam. Perhaps your heavy schedule would permit you to give the graduation address at some future time if sufficient advance notice were given. It would mean a lot to the trainees.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

W
Ogden Williams
Coordinator
Viet-Nam Training Center

cc: Maj. Gen. Knowlton
Howard E. Sollenberger-FVI

O/FSI/VTC:OWilliams:plg