

FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

May 11, 1970

Honorable William B. Macomber, Jr.
Deputy Under Secretary for Administration
Department of State

Dear Bill:

After my return from Thailand, I became aware of the letter to Secretary Rogers dated April 15, 1970, sent by five students now in training at VTC. I understand they also had a chance to talk to you personally.

In their letter, the students make several interesting points about how their recruitment in the Foreign Service did not make clear that they would be serving with CORDS in Viet-Nam, or that CORDS was under command of MACV. They go on to complain, however, about the excessive "military" training at VTC, and it is about this aspect of their letter that I would like to comment.

I enclose three documents which I think you will find interesting. The first is a memorandum dated May 8, 1970, from Captain Joel R. Gardner, USMC, who personally gives much of the instruction in the District Operations Course which the five students found so troublesome. The second is a letter from a young FSO, Mike Cotter, who is now serving in Kien Hoa Province in Viet-Nam. This letter was addressed to John Day, PER/JOP, and John forwarded it to me on January 29. The third letter from a more senior FSO, Pat Killough (age 33), who had previously served in Kabul and Hong Kong, was written at the conclusion of his VTC training. I believe these documents may tend to place the picture in better balance.

My own guess is that the manner in which certain FSOs were recruited was possibly unfortunate, but the allegation that the training at VTC is excessively military in its orientation is unfounded. Indeed, we have avoided many elements of military instruction which some people have recommended. For example, when the senior evaluators were sent to Viet-Nam by Howard MacCormack some months ago, I seem to recall that one of their recommendations was that the FSOs be given more training in how to handle

an M-16! The entire Fort Bragg visit has unfortunately been eliminated, for strictly budgetary reasons.

In any case, there is a war going on in Viet-Nam, and security is essential to the accomplishment of all our non-military objectives. If Foreign Service Officers are to play a role in that context, particularly at district level, they must not be totally illiterate in the security aspects of life. To date, I have never heard of a single instance where a civilian officer serving in Viet-Nam complained because he was personally being required to engage in military activities. A number of FSOs and FSIs have voluntarily gone along on military operations in order to find out with their own eyes what they were like, and in order to show the rest of the team that they were prepared to accept the risks which other Americans accept in Viet-Nam. Such activity was always strictly voluntary, however. Furthermore, one of the real values of the CORDS teams is their role in helping to protect the Vietnamese civilian population from undesirable military activity.

I think you will find the attached to be interesting reading which may tend to balance whatever impressions may have been conveyed by the five students with whom you met. Some 1,275 officers of all types have gone through VTC since 1967. I doubt that many of them would agree with the letter sent to Secretary Rogers which has occasioned this letter to you.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

Ogden Williams
Coordinator
Viet-Nam Training Center

Enclosures

cc: Mr. Sollenberger

O/FSI/VTC:OWilliams:d

cc: STATE