

November 19, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Brigadier General Alexander Haig
Office of the Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
The White House

SUBJECT: Why the Viet-Nam Training Center Needs the Support
of a National Security Decision Memorandum

The Viet-Nam Training Center trains all the Province Senior Advisors, all the District Senior Advisors, and all the civilian language officers who serve in the CORDS organization in Viet-Nam. These personnel are the backbone of CORDS. CORDS is the field cutting edge of the present United States pacification and Vietnamization programs. The pacification and Vietnamization programs have a top priority among U.S. foreign policy concerns. It follows that the training mission which supports CORDS should also receive a high priority.

The Viet-Nam Training Center was established in April 1967 by direction of the White House. The decision was then made that VTC should be located within the Department of State, specifically within the Foreign Service Institute. The Agency for International Development was named as executive agent and sole funding source for the Viet-Nam Training Center (see Tab A). An interagency group was designated to oversee VTC operations.

From 1967-1969, VTC operations received adequate, although declining, support from the parent agencies concerned. In 1967 it was empowered to recruit its staff virtually at will from A.I.D. personnel and other officers having experience in Viet-Nam. It was not subjected to restrictions as to personnel ceilings or slots. Its funds were made available freely. By 1969, however, the honeymoon was clearly over as far as the Viet-Nam Training Center was concerned. Among the problems which surfaced in 1969, or loomed on the horizon, were the following:

1. Budget. In the preparation of the FY 1971 budget, VTC was instructed to reduce all possible costs in anticipation of A.I.D. budgetary reductions. This was done, and \$63,393 was deducted from actual FY 1970 expenses of \$903,444. In August 1970, VTC was instructed by A.I.D. to take an immediate further cut of ten percent of its estimated total costs for FY 1971 (see Tab B). This purpose

was ultimately accomplished by transferring staff positions from the A.I.D. training budget (which supports VTC) to the A.I.D. personnel office budget, and also by reducing VTC operational funds an additional \$10,500.

2. Department of the Army Participation. Whereas the original Memorandum of Understanding between A.I.D. and the Department of State which established the Viet-Nam Training Center provided for funding solely by A.I.D., a different practice was agreed upon for the Department of the Army with respect to military students. On February 8, 1968, the Department of the Army agreed to reimburse A.I.D. for the expenses of language training at the rate of \$37.50 per man week. In FY 1970, this rate was increased to \$44.55, which still represented only about 50 percent of actual cost. In an effort to lighten its funding load, A.I.D. is expected to require total reimbursement by Department of the Army (and possibly by other parent agencies with respect to their students) for FY 1972. If A.I.D. does make this demand, there are indications that the Department of the Army may withdraw its military students from the Viet-Nam Training Center and send them to Fort Bragg, Fort Bliss, or elsewhere for Viet-Nam training. This would effectively spell the end of the Viet-Nam Training Center and its training mission for CORDS/Viet-Nam, since military Province Senior Advisors and District Senior Advisors make up more than three-quarters of the student body at this time.

It is submitted that the Viet-Nam Training Center is in a position to provide both operations and language training superior to that available elsewhere in the United States. Among the contributing factors are the fact of co-located civilian and military training (which parallels the personnel situation in CORDS/Viet-Nam), and the location of the Center in Washington, which makes it possible to obtain a continuing flow of high-quality outside speakers, recently returned Viet-Nam personnel, and the like. Additionally, the Library facilities and staff experience available at VTC are believed to excel anything available elsewhere. The suitability of VTC as the preferred training site for military Province Senior Advisor and District Senior Advisor personnel has been exhaustively reviewed by the Department of the Army itself on two separate occasions. In both instances the surveys strongly recommended retention of military personnel at the Viet-Nam Training Center, and such recommendations were approved by senior officers of the Department of the Army (see Tab C). Nevertheless, there is known to be considerable pressure from the Military Assistance Institute at Fort Bragg to assume responsibility for the training of military Province Senior Advisors and District Senior Advisors. Should A.I.D.

demand a larger share of reimbursement for the cost of language training at VTC — which we understand is A.I.D.'s present intention — it is more than possible that this factor alone would lead to a reversal of the earlier Department of the Army decisions in favor of VTC.

In summary, although the Viet-Nam Training Center is an interagency activity, it could be put out of business at any time by unilateral action on the part of either A.I.D., the Department of the Army, or the Department of State. Although an interagency advisory group exists, it has no authority to establish policies or to protect the training mission performed at the Viet-Nam Training Center. (As an illustration, the training organization of A.I.D. recently conducted its own investigation of VTC and will in the near future be making recommendations, without participation from any interagency body. It is noteworthy that the A.I.D. personnel conducting the survey are themselves engaged in a parallel training activity, and that any funds going to VTC adversely affect their own budget.)

Conclusion

Despite the enthusiastic support of the Viet-Nam Training Center's mission and performance expressed on repeated occasions by CORDS/Viet-Nam, some examples of which are contained in Tab D, the VTC is clearly increasingly vulnerable to unilateral action by individual participating agencies which have interests to defend which are not consonant with VTC or its mission. The Viet-Nam Training Center clearly needs a reaffirmation of its priority from the same source which created it in the first place. The Viet-Nam Training Center directly serves only the interests of CORDS/Viet-Nam. Its continued existence is not a matter of prime bureaucratic concern to the various parent agencies in Washington. A.I.D. is under pressure to reduce its budget. State will inevitably tend to view CORDS/Viet-Nam, and the training program which supports CORDS, as being less permanent than traditional Department activities. The training establishments within the Department of the Army are notably keen to expand their scope. If the Administration agrees with CORDS/Viet-Nam that now, as in the past, the principle of civilian-administered, combined training of civilian and military personnel at a site in the Washington area serves the best interests of the CORDS effort in Viet-Nam, a renewed policy determination should be made to that effect in the form of a National Security Decision Memorandum which should (1) clearly re-establish the priority of the training mission in support of CORDS/Viet-Nam and the pacification and Vietnamization programs; (2) reaffirm the principle of co-located military and civilian training

in the Washington area at the Viet-Nam Training Center; and (3) establish the NSC as the ultimate determinant on policy matters affecting VTC and its mission.

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Attachments

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