

FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

June 4, 1971

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

Dear Bill:

Thank you for your letter of May 24. While the whole medal question is not of great importance, one aspect of it is, and I make this comment on behalf of many people who may be affected. I refer to the last paragraph of Ledgerwood's letter, which I presume is a form letter sent to everyone, in which he announces that the Review Committee is sending copies of the letter to the parent agencies in Washington, presumably for inclusion in the personnel file. Any letter stating that an individual presumably did a good job, but not good enough to justify a medal he was given by the Vietnamese Government, can only have a damaging effect career-wise. I know because I served on promotion panels here in 1969. While no doubt the Committee's purposes are blameless, they remind one of the ancient saying that with friends like that, no one needs enemies. I think that, at the very least, CORDS should protect its people by assuring that the Review Committee restrain its generosity and not send copies of letters of the type sent by Ledgerwood to encumber the personnel files of former CORDS employees. It would be far better just to say nothing.

On the whole procedural issue, I mentioned the Ledgerwood letter to Frank Wisner some weeks ago at lunch. I was not then aware that Frank is on the State Department's Awards Committee. He was unaware of the procedures being carried out in Saigon and insisted that I give him a copy of the Ledgerwood letter and my letter to you, since he thought the Review Committee action was absurd. Thereafter it transpired that the Washington Awards Committee brought the matter to John Burns' attention, and I have now seen a letter written by him to Ambassador Berger on the general issue.

It was no desire of mine that my case should provide the pretext for all this correspondence. Nevertheless, I am glad that wiser and more senior men agree with my basic gut reaction that there is something very unsound, if not unseemly, about the whole business. It would

also appear that if the Saigon committee, per your letter of May 24, is justifying its action on the grounds that Washington would apply even more stringent standards than it, then they are operating under a misconception.

Please do not take time to acknowledge this letter since its main purpose is simply to get the Review Committee to stop putting well-intentioned but damaging letters in people's files, and not to assert any personal claims of mine on a matter which is not only unimportant in itself, but which I view as being really between me and the Vietnamese anyway, and about which Messrs. Ledgerwood et al could not possibly have any basis for a relevant opinion.

Sincerely,

Ogden Williams
Coordinator
Viet-Nam Training Center

cc: O/DG - Mr. Burns

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