

FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

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Mr. William J. Sailer  
Office of East Asian and Pacific Programs  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs  
Department of State

Dear Mr. Sailer:

Following up on my telephone conversations with you and Mr. Teare this morning, I should like to propose for the consideration of the Department and of the Embassy in Saigon the name of Nguyen Ngoc An as a leader grantee. An was Minister of Chieu Hoi and Information during the recent Huong Cabinet. He is now living in relative seclusion in Saigon and presumably would be available for a 45 to 90-day visit to the United States. My reasons for proposing Minister An are the following:

Minister An comes from Trang Bang District of Hau Nghia Province. He belongs to the Cao Dai minority, and for much of his career was a professional educator and local dignitary in that area. During the war against the French, he was a battalion commander of Viet Minh and had extensive personal combat experience. An was a member of the "Caravelle Group," and after the fall of President Diem became for a time number two in the Ministry of the Interior. He then returned to private life, and several years ago was the victim of an assassination attempt in which he survived five bullet wounds fired at close range.

An is what I would describe as a Roman type of character. To give an example, while he was Minister of Chieu Hoi, he used to go to bed at 10 o'clock, rise at 3:00 a.m. and work on office papers until 6:00. Then he would take one hour of calisthenics and jogging before proceeding to the office where he would put his paperwork in the "out box" at the beginning of the day. He has all his life lived a regime of simplicity and restraint, which accounts for his exceptional vigor. Although 56 years old, he has the energy and muscular strength of a man much younger.

An is particularly friendly to the United States in more than a conventional way. When he was severely wounded by a Viet Cong assassin several years ago, he was taken to the U.S. Army hospital

at Cu Chi where he developed a profound admiration for both American technology and American dedication to service. He still retains warm and sentimental memories of his association with the United States medical authorities at that time. In cultural outlook he is clearly a conservative, believing in Viet-Nam's ancient traditions. Politically, he deploras military rule in Viet-Nam and would welcome return to civilian control of the government. He views some of the Vietnamese generals as either incompetent or compromised by their associations with the French during the colonial period. He retains a deep patriotic feeling for his country, and is a "Southerner" in the political rivalries between South and North Vietnamese within the government. He looks forward some day to returning to a position of influence either in the legislative or executive branch of the Government of Viet-Nam.

I believe Minister An should be eligible for a leader grant because he has a distinguished record as a Vietnamese patriot, because he has a strong sense of comradeship for the United States as well as understanding of American purposes in Viet-Nam, and because he may soon again be able to return to a position of influence within the GVN structure. Because of his exceptional vigor, I do not think his relative age in terms of other candidates should be considered an exclusionary factor.

In conclusion, I think it would be in our national interest to accord Mr. An the privilege of a leader grant to visit this country, and would request that you forward the nomination for consideration by the Mission, if you concur.

Sincerely yours,

Ogden Williams  
Coordinator  
Viet-Nam Training Center