



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

June 16, 1969

PERSONAL

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

Dear Bill:

I had an informal telephone conversation with Erwin Brigham the other day which he apparently decided to transcribe and forward to Bill Knowlton by back channel, not going through Fritz Freund. Bill Knowlton and Palmer in turn thought some of the points were sufficiently noteworthy that they wanted to send them by back channel to Rosson. They did not intend to make a federal case of anything, nor to raise any questions with General Abrams. All of this was done, starting with Brigham's action, without any knowledge of mine whatsoever. The first I heard of it was when Fritz called me to say that Abrams was upset.

My main regret in this matter is whatever embarrassment might have been caused to you or Jake. I carefully noted that my views were not shared by you, so you can cheerfully disassociate yourself with my opinions, as I gather you have already done.

I enclose a letter I have sent to General Abrams. (For your personal information only, both Freund and Knowlton generally concur in the content of the letter. I read it in draft to both of them.) I have done so largely because I have a high regard for him and hoped to avoid any possible misunderstanding. My general view that there has been a problem of emphasis in the homogenization of CORDS, both in Saigon and in the Regions, appears to be so widely shared by virtually every civilian who returns here from the field that I cannot believe that my thinking is quite as obtuse as you and Jake feel it is. The Pacification Committees can perform crucial functions in coordinating GVN ministerial operations, but they cannot run each Ministry. The trend of events over the past year has been to de-emphasize and downgrade the importance, on the US advisory side, of assuring effective ministerial performance, even though such was no one's intention, and the multitude of people who see a danger in this, clearly enjoy, in almost all cases, the best of personal relationships with the military. The problem is therefore one of roles and missions, attitudes and priorities, not personalities. For example, Alex Firfer is simply

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delighted with his relations with the military and feels that I Corps can be an exception to the general situation. Nevertheless, he feels that serious trouble is in the offing elsewhere in Viet-Nam within a matter of months. If he has not discussed this with you in detail, I think such would be useful.

In any case, these views of mine do not relate to my designated position as Coordinator of the Viet-Nam Training Center. The curriculum of this school does not debate how the effort in Viet-Nam should be organized. It rather accepts the organization that exists and attempts to teach the students how it functions. This school also must attempt to convince the students that their assignment in Viet-Nam is a good thing, both personally and professionally, and that the US effort there, however tragic, stems from our national interests and ideals.

Having so spoken, I close by reiterating that my sole regret in any of this would be any embarrassment caused to you or Jake. For the rest, one can only describe reality as one sees it and accept any penalties that might be imposed as a result.

With best personal regards,

Sincerely,

Ogden

Ogden Williams

cc: MACCORDS - George D. Jacobson
ACofS, CORDS

Enclosure:
Copy of Letter to Gen. Abrams
dated June 12, 1969