

FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

December 29, 1969

PERSONAL

Mr. Joseph S. Tenar, Director
Office of Personnel and Manpower
Agency for International Development
Washington, D. C. 20523

Dear Joe:

Several days ago Howard Sollenberger inquired as to whether I would be prepared to extend here at the Viet-Nam Training Center beyond July 1970, which would be the completion date of the traditional one-year tour for Coordinators at this school. I told him that I really had no idea as yet, and it is in this connection that I wish to write this letter to you.

My job at VTC has been very rewarding because it involves dealing with people and is somewhat akin to running a small overseas mission. The same problems of administration, budget, personnel, and operations present themselves. If I were to elect not to remain at VTC beyond July, it would not be because of any dissatisfaction with the function, and I might add that the association with the staff, students, and with the rest of the Foreign Service Institute has been most rewarding and appreciated. Nevertheless, in accordance with the "Peter principle," I do not feel that I have attained that level of maximum incompetence which bureaucrats are supposed to strive for, and therefore would like to explore other options with you.

Obviously, I remain very interested in the Far East. Rod O'Connor is an acquaintance of mine of many years standing. He knows me pretty well, and might be interested in having me work in some part of his area, either in Thailand, Korea, Washington, or elsewhere. I have deep associations with Viet-Nam, as you know, and amazingly enough I am at long last learning spoken Vietnamese here at VTC. I would return to Viet-Nam, but I have a special problem in this area. By virtue of having served there for many years, beginning in 1956, I have inevitably acquired experience and expertise which I do not feel should be undersold. If I return to Viet-Nam for the US Government, I would want to do so in some role where this experience and background could be brought to bear to make a really meaningful contribution. Recently, I was again queried as to whether I would return

to head the Refugee Program in CORDS. I noted that the CORDS Refugee Director is, at the present time, a relatively junior staff officer, functioning in a military chain of command, who no longer really controls his own program. His writ with respect to the program does not run very far in Saigon at MACV Headquarters, and it does not run at all outside of Saigon where his authority to direct the program cuts across the geographical responsibilities of the Regional Deputy for CORDS and the Province Senior Advisor in each Province of Viet-Nam. When I recall, in 1956, acting as Ambassador Reinhardt's representative to discuss directly with President Diem how Viet-Nam should handle its Chinese minority, or in 1963 serving as Acting Director of the AID Mission, or struggling in vain with AID/W in 1964 to present the massive augmentation of AID personnel in Viet-Nam (since quality and not quantity was the relevant consideration then and now), I am understandably reluctant to serve as a small cog in a bureaucratic machine whose leaders have, in some cases, less insight into the Vietnamese problem than I do myself. I would not wish to return to Viet-Nam in a capacity which gave me little chance to influence events. Conversely, in the proper job, I would be prepared to do so.

At one point, about a year ago, I was sounded out very informally and unofficially about becoming the Asian Development Bank resident coordinator for Viet-Nam. This kind of thing would be very interesting to me.

Another interesting possibility for the short-term after July would be to attend the FSI economics courses which I understand are excellent. Again, I have been rated by FSI as 4+ in French, which might also make me of use to the Agency in French-speaking areas. Phil Birnbaum knows me pretty well and might or might not be interested.

All of the above rather rambling commentary has been presented in the hope that it might elicit some thoughts from you, at your leisure, which would greatly assist me in planning for the future. It would be an easy solution to a personnel problem merely to instruct me to remain where I am, but I would earnestly request that the matter not be settled prematurely in that manner. I am interested in keeping moving within the Agency and feel that accepting a "stabilized" role too soon might be the worst mistake I could make. No hard and fast decisions need to be made in the immediate future, but I would much appreciate your thinking on this

question when and if your heavy schedule permits. I would also welcome an opportunity, at some time convenient to you, to discuss certain aspects with you in person.

With best regards,

Sincerely,

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Ogden Williams
Coordinator
Viet-Nam Training Center