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October 7, 1970

Mr. Ogden Williams
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Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Ogden:

I enjoyed your letter, but am surprised at the "conclusion" you drew by inference, since in fact I quite agree with you.

First, remember I was writing to gently educate the military on why their "big unit" war was not the solution in Vietnam, that "clear and hold" might be better than "search and destroy," and that pacification was a lot more than the 173d Airborne Brigade (or civic action). If I were too critical of their performance, they'd react instead of read, and my educational aim would have been foiled.

Second, I never intended any suggestion that CORDS itself was the model for other similar situations. On the contrary, I stressed that every such situation will be unique and must be specially designed for. Didn't I say that "CORDS was a wartime expedient, designed exclusively for Vietnam?"

But what seems to really bug you and Ev is that my article could be construed to mean that the Army did it, and that military control is best. Don't be silly! You know that I wholly agree with what you say. But, you are also well aware of my point that, paradoxically, it took putting pacification under the military in order to get the clout and resources for the civilians to do the job. CORDS was civilian-run, both in Saigon and at region. That was my initial deal with Westy. But why cram it down their throats by crowing indecently over it?

You (and I presume Ev) never seem to grasp the key role of management as opposed to policy. You can't build an edifice without labor and materials, and by 1967 only the military had them in sufficient quantity. In reality, we stole them blind for our war, and that was only possible because we were part of their team.

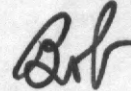
Now as to your different scenario. I quite agree that civilian leadership is best, if we can get it. If we had had a top civilian proconsul who ran both the military and civilian shows, amen that CORDS or something like it should have been under him. But we didn't (Taylor was the nearest thing, and he didn't use his power)! So by 1967, when I revamped the show, it would have been ridiculous to put CORDS under the Embassy. Who had all

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the assets? And don't forget the urgent need for local security -- we had to get RF/PF from RVNAF, and MACV had all the clout with ~~US~~ ^{US}.

In sum, I doubt that I've run much risk of perpetuating a myth, especially since the military did so poorly overall in SVN. I also think you're blind not to see that there was no logical alternative by 1967 to putting pacification under the military where it could compete effectively for resources. But this said, I agree that CORDS would never have succeeded without bright and energetic civilian leadership, not least including you. Yet I designed it to allow precisely this, sold the concept to LBJ, McNamara, Bunker, and Westy, and then insisted we be allowed to run our show. Indeed, this may have been the neatest trick of all.

Warmly,



R. W. Komer

RWK:jg

cc: Ev Bumgardner