

15 October 1969

Major General Donn R. Pepke
Commanding General
4th Infantry Division, USARV
APO San Francisco 96262

Dear Donn:

As you recall, we continually answer letters written to the President and to individual Congressmen on virtually every aspect of the war in Vietnam. I am inclosing one such letter written to the President based upon a Virginia Daily News Record article relating to the comments of a member of the 4th Engineer Division. I have included a copy of my reply which is based upon information available here in the Pentagon.

These letters are merely for your information.

Warmest regards to you and Patty--we look forward to seeing you soon.

Most sincerely,

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as

RICHARD T. KNOWLES
Major General, GS
Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff
for Military Operations



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MILITARY OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20310

15 October 1969

Mr. Fred O. Funkhouser
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Funkhouser:

On behalf of President Nixon, I am replying to your recent letter regarding a newspaper article which featured a letter written by an enlisted member of the 4th U.S. Infantry Division in Vietnam.

Having served in Vietnam for over two years with combat units with much of this time being spent at An Khe, I have a special awareness and concern for the well-being of our troops there, and I understand and fully appreciate many of the comments made by Specialist Four Hartman in his letter to the editor of the Daily-News Record. This young man's dismay at the home front reaction to our efforts in Vietnam is shared by many of our men who are serving their country in Vietnam. Specialist Four Hartman can be proud of the fact that he is taking an active part in our efforts to halt the spread of communism in Southeast Asia and that he and his fellow soldiers are helping to provide the opportunity to the South Vietnamese people to determine their own political future without interference from the Communists.

There is a significant reason that certain weapons and ammunition are secured in central locations where not required and I appreciate the opportunity of explaining this practice which has been often misunderstood and incompletely reported from Vietnam. I am basing this information on facts previously obtained from Vietnam concerning this specific problem. Our experience in Vietnam has proved that we can reduce unfortunate accidents and save lives of our troops and those of our allies by safeguarding individual weapons and ammunition where the enemy situation and security considerations are such that all personnel are not required to be armed continuously. The practice of securing weapons and ammunition in a central location is accomplished only when contact with the enemy would be extremely remote or when an adequate defensive force is present to defend the base against ground attack.

The decision to withdraw individual weapons or ammunition and place them under central control is made by the local commander after a careful assessment of the nature of the immediate threat in his area--and then it is done only when the conditions are such that ammunition and weapons could be distributed to all essential troops well before they might have

Mr. Fred O. Funkhouser

a need to use them. This system has been adopted in South Vietnam, based on considerable experience. The Commanding General, United States Army, Vietnam, fully supports and encourages such actions provided they include strict provisions for timely reissue should even an unexpected need arise. The safety of the unit must not be jeopardized.

At An Khe where Specialist Four Hartman is currently stationed, the responsibility for the defense of the base is vested in a combat unit. This base defense unit is augmented as required by personnel and units from other tenant organizations located on the base. All personnel comprising the base defense force are well armed and operate from heavily fortified defensive positions. The base at An Khe is protected by a permanent barrier system consisting of barbed wire fences and concertina wire reinforced with command detonated mines, explosives and numerous terrain obstacles. Towers with searchlights and bunkers overwatch this perimeter and are manned constantly with personnel armed with automatic weapons. A reserve force is also available to rapidly reinforce the perimeter defense in any threatened area. Additionally, preplanned artillery and mortar fires further insure the security of the base.

Practice alerts at An Khe revealed that everyone except the base defense force and the ready reaction force should be primarily concerned with seeking cover for themselves in the event of an enemy attack. Should personnel not under the control of the base defense force begin firing at what they suspect may be enemy troops, they would only expose themselves, possibly hamper movement of the reaction force and cause injury to themselves or other friendly troops in the area.

The final point raised by Specialist Four Hartman concerns the fact that while "on guard" he must obtain permission prior to firing his weapon. I believe it will be helpful if I explain this more fully. Each individual assigned to the base defense force at An Khe is assigned a specific zone of fire within his unit's sector of fire. He is also provided specific instructions as to what action to take in a variety of situations. It is absolutely necessary that each individual follow these instructions to insure that the defense of the perimeter is accomplished as it is planned and as a particular situation develops. An Tuc village, occupied by friendly civilians, lies within small arms range of the defense perimeter at the An Khe base. Accordingly, extreme care must be exercised in the control of fires in such areas to insure that the lives of innocent civilians are not placed in jeopardy by the random or indiscriminate firing of weapons.

Where defensive fire zones surrounding a base include areas inhabited by friendly civilians, oftentimes the families of Vietnamese soldiers, it is necessary for each individual to obtain clearance from the base defense commander to place fire into that zone to preclude death or injury to these

Mr. Fred O. Funkhouser

noncombatants. This procedure applies primarily in cases where an alert member of the base defense force believes he hears or sees movement to his front. When notified of this fact the base defense commander can instantaneously give clearance to fire, or he may choose other options available to him, such as to make a selective detonation of mines, sweep the area with searchlights, direct airborne armed helicopters to the area; or he may do none of these should he be aware of a friendly patrol operating in the area in which the disturbance was noted. Clearance to fire is not required if the base suddenly comes under massive enemy attack. In such cases the base defense commander will immediately give the order to fire through several alternative means which include open radio nets, pyrotechnic signalling devices and other alternate means of communication.

Nothing in existing base defense plans or in directives outlining rules of engagement for operations in Vietnam precludes an individual from firing his weapon in defense of his life. While we must be mindful of the safety of innocent people, I can assure you, Mr. Funkhouser, that the welfare and safety of our fighting men is uppermost in the minds of all commanders in Vietnam.

It is understandable that in Vietnam any policy which deprives a soldier of continuous possession of his weapon or ammunition may be difficult to understand. Be assured, Mr. Funkhouser, that the system described is designed solely for the protection and safety of our fine young men. We have learned from experience that we save lives and prevent injuries by adopting such procedures. Moreover, during my two years in Vietnam and almost two years here in the Pentagon closely monitoring the actions in Vietnam, I have not heard of a single case of a soldier being caught by surprise without his weapon because of this policy.

Mr. Funkhouser, I have taken the liberty of sending a copy of this correspondence to General Pepke, the Commanding General of the 4th Infantry Division, with the view of rechecking the accuracy of my reply to you and to see if I can obtain any information regarding the bunker incident. If additional information is available I will forward it to you at a later date.

Your interest in our men in Vietnam and in bringing the fighting to an end is greatly appreciated and I trust that my comments have served to more fully explain some of the existing policies in Vietnam.

Most sincerely,



RICHARD T. KNOWLES
Major General, GS
Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff
for Military Operations

offa Suffered Enough?

By HOLMES ALEXANDER

24, Hoffa became president of his Teamster local.

Clay was impressed at these evidences of self-reliance and leadership in a young man who went on to become a powerful Labor leader worth \$100,000 salary to the members.

Clay's next move was to seek interviews with Hoffa and Hoffa's developing nemesis, Bob Kennedy, then counsel for the McClellan committee. The writer called at Kennedy's office in the Senate office building, was "screened" by Kenneth O'Donnell and taken in to meet Kennedy. The interview was not productive. Kennedy was in one of his impatient and cryptic moods.

Clay next went to the marble place nearby which houses the

Teamsters Union in Washington. This time he was "screened" by Jake McCarthy who told him to read the transcripts and promised Clay a talk with Hoffa. In due time the writer and Hoffa sat down together, and Clay was exposed to a dynamic individual, far more cordial than Kennedy.

Clay ended by writing the "authorized" biography called "Ten Angels Swearing," which finds Hoffa winning every battle except the last one against the Justice Department and an adverse press. The biographer traces the family back into the early 1800's and brings them up to date.

First Black Sheep

If Jimmy is a crook, and not just a tough fighter for himself

and his union "boys," he's the very first black sheep in many generations of honest, hard-working, God-fearing folks. The title comes from a Lincoln motto which Hoffa still swears by, and which an amazing number of Americans seem to find appropriate in reconsidering the Hoffa case. The famed motto, something of a favorite to many controversial characters is framed in Hoffa's office:

"If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference."

OUR READERS WRITE

Please read!

'Information' From Vietnam

Editor, Daily-News-Record:

I am writing this letter hoping you will print its contents. I'm a fellow-Rockingham Countian serving in Vietnam. You can call it a protest if you like but I prefer to call it a information letter to my fellow citizens.

I'm not a long-haired hippie sitting on a campus somewhere protesting a war I know nothing about. I'm a GI living in the hell they are so set against. I don't like this war either and don't know many people over here that do.

But I think I do have a little more right to speak out about it since I'm a little more involved in it than the average citizen. Everyday we receive a newspaper with world news in it. We prefer to read the comics because the rest isn't too good for the morale.

What we read in the other parts of the paper makes us wonder what we're fighting for. Sure we heard about the men on the moon but we really don't care about that for it doesn't mean much to us. If America can put men on other planets why can't she stop this war? This may seem like a senseless question to some of you, but it isn't so silly when you're kneeling in knee-deep mud holding your dying buddy and crying like a baby.

Sure we hear about the race riots back there but we don't worry about that over here cause we don't have that problem. We respect each other over here, it doesn't matter if you are black or white, Protestant or Catholic. Here, we're all men and look out for each other. We don't have time to be prejudiced over here. If you stop and think about it you don't either.

I know there is a lot of World War II veterans in Rockingham County. Did you guys ever get

draft cards and running off to Canada and Sweden.

We know all about the Paris Peace talks, its the biggest farce that's ever come out of the war. If you were in this stinking mud you wouldn't be breaking your back trying to solve the problem either.

You wonder why all our men are dying over here, well, I can tell you why. Here in the 4th Engineer Bn., 4th Infantry Division, they made us lock up our weapons and took away our ammo. We are stationed in An Khe right now and we get hit every other night.

We have to stand in line to get ammo etc. so its no wonder guys get killed. The worst thing of all is 'on guard.'

If you see someone crawling in the wire you have to call in and get permission to shoot at him, then half the time you aren't allowed to shoot.

Two nights ago three guys in bunker 20 got killed 'cause they saw something in the wire in front of them and weren't allowed to fire on it, all of a sudden bunker 20 blew up.

It got a direct hit from a B-40 rocket and three men died cause the lifers had to play games. This is no place to play games in. So tell me how can a man fight a war this way when you can't even shoot at the enemy.

This is why so many people die over here. I'm writing this letter in remembrance of my three buddies in that bunker and hope someone can help us put a stop to this nonsense that's killing us. I hope you understand our point of view in this letter.

Sp. 4 Jerry Hartman

Co. D., 4th Engr. Bn. (I.D)