

File

Pleiku
22 August 1972

Dear Pat:

We received your letters yesterday, and were quite lifted to hear directly from you. We had scattered information of the general state of your plans, but the net result has been a rather confusing overall picture. I'm sure that continued direct communication would go far toward fostering an improved sense of security among our Montagnard families, after the incredible stresses of the last few months.

The general hospital situation is summarized in my letter to Louis Braille, copy enclosed. I would like to go into more detail on several points:

a. I am under considerable pressure from the other Westerners to reconsolidate Minh-Quy. No one, I think, feels the need more than I. Pleiku is an unfriendly place. Living in Pleiku and commuting most afternoons to Kontum, I am constantly reminded of the inefficiency of the present arrangement. For the past ten days, we have been attempting a comprehensive fact-finding project to help us objectively decide. High on the priority of information sources, are the Bishop, the PSA, II Corps HQ, and the Montagnards, and feelings are mixed. The original evacuation was made because the staff was afraid of the war; as long as this fear remains, I feel that they should be allowed to remain as refugees, a status that is most unpleasant for them. A forced return (even a voluntary one) will lead to the expectation of another Minh-Quy airlift should the situation

once more deteriorate, and who can promise another evacuation? Furthermore, among the Western staff, I feel the final decision is solely mine. If the wrong choice is made, regardless of who has done the deciding, the decision will not have been made by the Western staff, it will not have been made by the Montagnards, but the blame will fall directly on me, fair or not. The approach I consider best is to compile as much objective data as possible, opinions of significant people, and present this information directly to the Pleiku Montagnard staff. After time for discussion with their families, a vote should be taken, and the results of that vote should be the final decision. Although the separation is difficult, it is obviously workable, and potentially moreso with a new VPVN coming.

b. The demands made on the hospital over the past few months have, as I see it required a change in my role. The definition of optimal patient care has been influenced by the marked increase in patient load, as well as the many additional duties thrust upon us. I don't think the level of care has declined significantly, though diagnoses are often more delayed, and responsibility for care is delegated more and more to Montagnard staff. Just as important, I feel, is to maintain our logistics operations at this critical time. Many military units are now standing down, and a wealth of material is available. Furthermore, the performance of the Kontum staff under battle conditions, and the destruction wreaked by the ARVN offer prime bargaining points for concessions from the government, as long as the right people are approached before they forget. Important

priorities at this time, I think, are:

- a. Get all fighting units out of the immediate Old Minh-Quy site, and get a cross on the roof. If the NVA return, as is expected, the important buildings could be significantly damaged.
- b. Press Province and ARVN officials for restitution for damages at Old Minh-Quy. Some response has already been forthcoming, but more is needed. As Americans leave, Minh-Quy Hospital will have to become more and more involved with Province people, and some commitment now ~~now~~ (on Province's part) could be useful. Funds are available via the Province Chief's request to Saigon, for repair of civil damages. A detailed estimate of what is needed is the first prerequisite.
- c. Approach the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education for nursing certification for our qualified workers. This is probably futile, but in view of the actions of Province Hospital (MOH is quite upset), and the performance of our staff during the recent offensive, it may be our foot in the door.
- d. Disseminate information about Minh-Quy and its material needs. Most of the actual work of scrapping can take care of itself, if people know where to send things.

Concerning my tour here— ~~Indisposition~~ As I wrote to Louis (a letter you have probably already received), I am tired, frustrated, and ready to go home. Shortly after you left, George Christian was called back to Saigon; and the only other physician ~~was~~ ^{has been} Otto Heins, whose level of skill proved to be a drastic cure for hepatitis. We asked Dr. Dill to assign him elsewhere, after about a week. It is,

however, in the best interest of Minh-Quy that you be allowed time to reach a satisfactory solution to the problem of the kids. I am prepared to stay as long as is necessary, but I hope it won't turn out to be too long. I also hope that you do not settle for a temporary solution just to get back more quickly (I doubt if you will). I only ask that we be kept informed directly of progress and setbacks, as well as any suggestions you may have concerning our operation here.

We managed to lose the key to the Red Peril, and have had to rewire the ignition. If you have a spare key, though, it would allow us to use the trunk, and to lock it when parked.

Good luck with the paperwork.

Sincerely,

John W. Taylor, M.D.