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Date: Fri, 10 Sep 1999 02:26:17 -0500
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Subject: Korean War Archive
To:

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Dear Admiral:

I am sorry I missed your telephone call yesterday. I was monitoring a class of a junior faculty member who is up for tenure and promotion this year, and had turned my cell phone off to avoid any disruptions in class. When I got back to the office, I returned your call but discovered that you had already left the office. I will call again later this morning. (It is now 0220.)

I had the occasion to chat with Chancellor Montford yesterday afternoon concerning the Korean War archive. He is now behind this project 100%. Thinks it is a great opportunity for Texas Tech (which, of course, it is). As I listened yesterday to the news that the former USS CABOT, the last Independence-class aircraft carrier from WW II, has been sold for scrap for \$135,000, it reinforced in my own mind the need for us to take vigorous action to ensure that the records and memories of the Korean War veterans are not similarly lost.

Despite the image of the Korean War as the "forgotten" war, I think I have had five master's theses completed in recent years on Korean War topics. And right now we have two dissertations in progress which have significant Korean War components: one is a biography of USMC General Keith Barr McCutcheon, who became deeply involved with helicopters during Korea. The other is an examination of the evolution of VMF 214 from its purely interceptor role during WW II into its purely CAS role in Korea. The two students working on these each received prestigious doctoral fellowships from the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation last year. The Marines pointed out to me at that time that it was the first time they ever awarded two such fellowships to the same university.

Additionally, Dr. Don Walker advised me today that he plans to submit a proposal for him to establish and teach a semester-long course on the Korean War. Therefore, I would say that we already have the academic infrastructure in place here to make relocation of the Korean War archive to Texas Tech a logical move. I think the arguments will be well received at the Center for Study of the Korean War.

We received a call from the United Nations earlier this week. Tran Bach Dang, who was the #2 man in the NLF and in charge of the Saigon/ChoLon/Giadinh area, is coming to the United States on a UN-sponsored research trip. He has requested, as his first stop, that he be permitted to visit the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech. At present, I anticipate that he will arrive here on 21 September, and probably leave on the 25th. I will be departing on 23 September for Annapolis for the biennial Naval History Symposium.

This visit offers us the opportunity to highlight our archival activities and also to continue our push for them to provide some documentation. I have little doubt that his desire to visit here is a result of reports Lt. Gen. Uoc made after his return to Vietnam in April.

I will forward a package of biographical information on Dang in today's mail. He apparently is the senior surviving member of the founders of the NLF, and headed the effort in the Saigon area, 1965-1975. I had the opportunity to meet him in Hanoi in 1998. At that time I noted that he was treated most reverentially by all Vietnamese present. He delivered quite a stirring speech about the "good old days" when he was a young revolutionary in the South. The SRV Prime Minister and also General Giap listened attentively during this particular presentation. Afterwards, Vietnamese folks lined up for the honor of having their picture taken with him.

I have briefed Chancellor Montford on all of this and as soon as we get a firm schedule from the UN, we will work out a program for the visit which will ensure that he is received by the highest level leadership within the University and also in the city. I deeply regret the timing of the visit means I will not be there to oversee the entire operation; however, at this point I cannot in good faith withdraw from commitments at Annapolis. Mr. Khanh will be at Dan's side throughout his visit here, and Dr. Cullen will closely control everything else. I will be here for the first full day of the visit, and so will ensure everything gets started on the right foot.

Phil Price has committed to provide an appropriate car for Dang's transportation and I will ensure the appropriate security measures are in place. Owing to Dang's seniority within the NLF, I think we must very actively consider the possibility that should the Vietnamese-American community learn of the planned visit in advance, they would take action to protest it. Therefore, my approach will be to ensure that there is absolutely no advance publicity for the visit. Toward the end of the visit, we will arrange some local media coverage, designed to be aired/printed about the time Dang is leaving Lubbock. That way, we will be able to receive some positive publicity from the visit, but will limit the possibility of the sort of negative publicity public protests would bring.

I think the pay-off from this visit for Texas Tech will come when Dang goes back to Vietnam and reports all that he has seen and done here. I suspect we will see, as a result of this, a further opening toward us in Vietnam.

As an aside, Mr. Khanh assures me that within the Vietnamese hierarchy, Mr. Dang is considerably more senior than General Uoc. He will receive the full VIP treatment here.

As for my Washington visit, I am scheduled to meet both Ambassador Le Van Bang and former Ambassador Bui Diem before we meet for dinner on the 15th, so will be able to report recent developments to both and then report to you the results of those visits. I also am slated to call on Congressmen Sam Johnson and Larry Combest on the afternoon of the 15th, to check on the progress of their efforts to get federal funding for the "Virtual Vietnam Archive" project.

Very respectfully, Jim Reckner