

April 15, 1957

In reply refer to: I-13475/7

Dear Mr. Robertson:

Recent developments have brought about a new urgency in resolving the problem of the ceiling on U. S. military personnel in Viet-Nam. You will remember that by interdepartmental agreement early in 1956 there was established a ceiling of 692, which includes 342 for the MAAG and 350 for TERM, the Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission.

Two facets of the problem now point to the necessity of doing away with the MAAG ceiling and permitting the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force to augment MAAG Viet-Nam with the additional personnel necessary to accomplish the mission there.

The first aspect is that raised in the telegram from the Embassy in Saigon to the Department of State, 2772, of 12 March 1957, which points out that the International Control Commission is becoming increasingly more restive in respect to TERM and recommends consideration of several courses of action. The Department of Defense concurred in the April 9 Department of State telegram to Saigon which stated that a solution of the problem along the lines of incorporating TERM into an increased MAAG was under study and that the Department of State would discuss the problem with the Canadians, British, French, and Indians. This telegram was the result of a conference on March 20 of staff representatives of the two departments in which Ambassador Durbrow participated.

The second aspect of the problem is the necessity for taking over the training of the Vietnamese Navy and Air Force. It will be remembered that TERM was created for a dual purpose, to provide a logistical organization to resolve the problems of excess property in Indochina and logistical training in Viet-Nam, and to free the MAAG from other duties so that its personnel could concentrate on the training of the Vietnamese Army. The withdrawal of the French Army training personnel required this increased emphasis on training. In the telegram from Chief, MAAG Viet-Nam 5607 of 4 April, we have been informed that President Ngo Dinh Diem told the Chief, MAAG that agreement had been reached with the French Ambassador for the withdrawal of the French Air Force and Navy training missions upon the completion of the present courses of instruction. The first completion is scheduled for this month, and additional U.S. military personnel will be required to pick