

15 August 1984

Mr. Ted Gittinger
Oral History
The Lyndon Baines Johnson Foundation
2313 Red River Street
Austin, Texas 78705

Dear Ted:

I did make inquiries about your wish to locate and interview Agency people who might know about activities in Southeast Asia in the late 1960s. After this long delay, I'm sorry to have to report that I seem to have produced more questions than answers from the offices involved, and I'm not at all sure that we'll be able to give you much help. For this reason I think that the best course might for me to outline the Agency's concerns so that you can, if you wish, send me a letter describing what you have in mind doing and the specific help that CIA might provide.

My colleagues have reminded me that the U.S. Government does not officially confirm CIA's presence anywhere abroad (although there has been, limited official acknowledgement of a CIA presence in Saigon during the Vietnam War). Moreover, the Agency's duty to protect sources and methods makes us worry about discussions of possible relationships with other friendly intelligence services, at any time or place.

In light of these concerns, these are some points that you might treat if you send along a proposal:

Your official status, and the official character and purpose of the interviews.

The use you plan to make of the transcripts and how they will be handled: if unclassified, who will have access to them; what kind of publications will come out of them.

The topics you would like to ask people about: the time periods, places, people, organizations and issues involved.

As we discussed, the Agency has helped the Department of State's History Office in their interviews of retired officers for the forthcoming Vietnam volumes in the Foreign Relations of the United States series. After State had identified the retired officers--six or eight, as I recall--that they wished to interview, the Agency's Executive Director wrote each to encourage him to cooperate, within the terms of his secrecy agreements. The interviews, however, were principally for background information, and as the enclosed copy of the Executive Director's form letter explains, State will submit anything that they propose actually to use in the FRUS volumes to CIA for review. State treats the tapes and transcripts of these interviews as potentially classified, which is to say that neither State nor the officer interviewed can divulge or use the material without prior CIA review and approval.

I'm afraid that all of this is not very encouraging, but if you send me a proposal I'll be glad to see what I can arrange. Give me a call-
-if I can answer any questions.

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With all good wishes,

Sincerely,



J. Kenneth McDonald
Chief Historian

Enclosure

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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

Dear Mr.

The Office of the Historian of the Department of State currently is engaged in the preparation of the official record of the diplomacy of the Vietnam War for publication in the Department of State's documentary series Foreign Relations of the United States. The present focus is on the 1961-1963 period. In connection with that project, the Office of the Historian is planning to interview a number of former CIA employees who had served in Vietnam in order to fill in possible gaps in the official documentation. In addition to the interview, the Office also would be interested in any personal papers that might relate to the individual's duties in Vietnam.

Your name was submitted to the Agency as one of the persons of interest to the Department of State for an interview. The interview will be conducted sometime in early 1984 by official historians and other personnel of the Office of the Historian who hold Top Secret and other appropriate security clearances. Prior to the publication of each Foreign Relations volume it will undergo a full clearance and declassification procedure which includes its review and approval by CIA of any information relating to the Agency's activities

Should you be contacted by the Office of the Historian, I would ask that you give them your full cooperation. Although I am sure that you understand that your pledge of secrecy remains effective regarding Agency operations, you should feel free to discuss any matter in that time period that would not reveal specific Agency activities. Should you have any questions whether or not you may discuss a particular topic or disclose particular information, I would ask that you contact the Directorate of Operations Information Review Officer [redacted]

[redacted] for further guidance at [redacted]

Sincerely,

Charles A. Briggs
Executive Director

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