

Mr. HILSMAN. No, sir, it is not. You can sum up those two paragraphs by different words, by saying that the Ambassador should be sure that on these points the newsmen know and write the truth, because the fact of the matter—and this goes to sloppy drafting, too—the fact of the matter is we are not in command or directing this war.

The fact of the matter is we are not in a combat role in this war. This is the truth. And what the cable is really saying here is "for God's sake, make sure that the reporters get enough information so they will write the truth."

Mr. GRIFFIN. Will the gentleman yield to me right there?

Mr. MEADER. Yes.

Mr. GRIFFIN. On that point, and you have said over and over again they are supposed to have access to various areas, they are supposed to be able to ride on helicopters and so on and so forth, but this paragraph says in effect, that correspondents should not be taken on missions that might result in stories harmful to the war effort. It seems to me that undercuts everything you have said. The Gould story in the Post says:

Instructions are to keep American reporters away from areas where fighting is being done or almost entirely by U.S. troops.

Mr. HILSMAN. There is no such thing in the cable.

Mr. GRIFFIN. You say there is no such thing, but of course the best way for an American reporter to know that is for him to go along and see that that is the case. Now this is a very broad statement. What are the situations then when they are not allowed to take—

Mr. HILSMAN. I said a little earlier that I have been unable to find anybody who could supply me with a specific example of what was intended by that paragraph, or to supply me with an instance in which that paragraph, since this cable has been written, determined the decision or was a factor in the decision.

The only time I know that American reporters have been excluded from a helicopter mission in recent months is the Zone D operation, and that was a Vietnamese decision. They excluded reporters on grounds they were afraid one of the newsmen was going to get killed, because it was considered a very dangerous operation.

Now this excluding of American reporters from those helicopters in the Zone D operation in November was against our policy. The decision was made by the Vietnamese military commander.

That paragraph in the cable is a prize example of sloppy drafting, because no one knows what it means. It has no operational cutting edge.

CABLE BADLY DRAFTED

Now let me also say that the parts of the cable you picked out are again sloppy drafting. If we were writing this cable correctly, as it really was meant to be, and the intention behind the paragraph was really clear, it would say we want to make sure that newsmen thoroughly understand the situation and are under no misapprehension that we are fighting this war. The Vietnamese are fighting it and the Vietnamese are directing it.

Now that is what was meant by that section of the cable. It is badly drafted because it is subject to misinterpretation.