

Enclosed with General Harkins' letter was a paper giving ground rules for discussion with the press. Copies of both these documents are attached.

For the Ambassador:

ROBERT E. BARBOUR,
Second Secretary of the Embassy.

Enclosures: As noted above in text

[Enclosure 1—Airgram No. 327, From Saigon]

To: All U.S. Military Adviser Personnel in South Vietnam

1. This letter is intended as a guide to assist advisers in press relations. Many factors affect this relationship, some of which are general in nature and some of which are peculiar to the present situation in South Vietnam.

2. Advisers responsible for escorting or making arrangements for travel of correspondents, such as during an operation, should make every effort to accommodate the person to the maximum allowed by the local situation.

3. When discussing information with the press, advisers should always be sincere and truthful. Classified areas must be thoroughly understood by all military personnel and not touched upon, even obliquely. If questions involving classified matters arise, so inform the correspondent and explain why they cannot be discussed. (Example: "The answer to that question is, I'm sure you'll agree, something the VC would like to know, and is, therefore, classified.") All reputable members of the press respect the need for security and will not deliberately violate security information. On the other hand, never use security classification as an excuse for not answering a question or discussing a subject when the subject is not classified. This usually results in military embarrassment, distrust on the part of the press, and a great deal of personal anguish for the responsible individual. If a subject is touched upon which the adviser does not feel qualified to discuss, he should tell the correspondent that he is not in possession of all the facts and would like to check further. If it is something the adviser would rather not discuss for any reason, he should say so. This is the simplest way to solve the problem and certainly the most honest. He should not try to hide things which he thinks might result in "bad press". They are usually discovered anyway, and the resultant "bad press" is usually worse.

4. The adviser must, at all times, remember his relationship locally with his own counterpart and as a member of the American forces in Vietnam. It is good to remember that we are here to advise, assist and support the Vietnamese Government in its efforts to maintain its independence against communist subversion. Tying in past or future training with an operation being conducted may also be valuable.

5. Whenever possible, it is preferable that the Vietnamese Officers brief representatives of the press on operations as it is their war. Advisers should, in all cases, urge their counterparts to do so.

6. "Discussion of Operations is probably the area wherein the advisers will have the greatest problem deciding what can profitably be discussed. As a guide, the general techniques of the operation, the overall plan and any significant and interesting points may be discussed as long as it is not to be published prior to the initiation of the plan, or does not reveal the details of the operation. The American support for the operation in general terms, not specifics, plus adviser participation are also good adviser subjects. Whenever possible, it is desirable to give correspondents a good "background" briefing on the mission, the area, the general plan and other points of interest *as long as such information can no longer compromise the situation*. This may fall into the category of "background" briefing (Inclosure #1, Definition). It will allow the correspondents to view the coming operation in the same light as the adviser. Nothing that will aid or abet the enemy should be discussed with the correspondents, such as the number of troops or troop units involved, the number of helicopters or fixed-wing aircraft, landing zones, direction of attack, etc."

7. Avoid discussing intelligence matters, particularly sources or agencies, in order to preclude compromising future information. This is easily understood by the press who have their own code concerning disclosure of sources of information.

8. From time to time, guidance on release of sensitive information will be disseminated to all advisers. This guidance should be strictly adhered to.

9. The American public has the right to maximum information concerning its armed services and their activities. This information should be limited only by