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PAR AVION



Saigon, 6 August 1960

Letter from William E. Colby, CIA station chief Saigon, Vietnam (1960-1962) to Nicholas A. Natsios, predecessor CIA station chief Saigon, Vietnam (1957-1960).

16 pages

CRYPTOME COLLECTION



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Saigon -
August 6 -

Dear Nick -

If you have already sent me a letter denouncing me as a no-good, ungrateful and illiterate wretch, don't try to stop it - I richly deserve it, and hang my head in shame. All I can say in defense is that I have had to run like blazes to keep up with the ~~at~~ vehicle you set in motion and wonder where you even found time to say hello in the morning. We have already

heard through the grapevine
that you are putting the boys
there on the same schedule,
and are achieving results.

It will do them good — even
though it is probably quite
a change.

I'll try to give you an
outline of how things are
going — The VC are still
hard at it and are having
considerable effect. During
the last couple of weeks they
seem to have moved north
to some extent, and are now
quite active in Zone D and
along highways 13 and 14.



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So far no Americans hit, but some French have had ~~trouble~~ trouble and the plantations are quite worried. The Gov't forces seem to be reacting quite well, to the extent they can. Col 'Khanh has been promoted to B.G. for his good work in the I Region, where he has kept the boys on the offensive whenever he can find the enemy. The Pres is also keeping the heat on and pushing for new ideas - the Civ Gd, the Youth and so forth are being shoved at

a great rate. And the agrivilles
are beginning to be completed,
and seem to be a success
despite the problems their
hasty erection caused. There
still isn't much of a demagogue
about him, but he is trying
to be folksy and has even
said he is going to do some
fireside chatting (he has, on
one or two occasions). Latest
big ~~and~~ wrinkle, on which
we are working hard now,
is a decision to have an
NSC and even (believe it or
not) a centralized you-
know - what.



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Our relations continue
along well. I see the
rich one, and told him
laughingly about your wedding
party, and we are trying
to get going on a project
to send some hunting teams
into the bad areas to search
the VC's out. Our candy-stick
is a bit in the dumps as he
has been hit pretty hard
recently on a number of fronts
by ourselves and his own
compatriots (the smooths seem
his only friends, and you
know how much they'll give).

"The monk" will be stopping
to see you soon, and you
can hear how we are
getting along with the teams
I mentioned above, as well
as angel (the next step) and
old alone — which continues
and is about to become
water-borne. Maybe you
can musnard things with
him — he got away here before
your latest on that got
here. Tiffy is proving to be
anything but, as a result
of the red-tape and slowness
of our own folks at home,
but I think progress is



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coming, if not here yet.
And, as important as any-
thing, our upstairs boys
are still pouring it out
and giving us lots of side
and inside views. I am
seeing Fountain regularly,
although he is just as
vague as ever, and I also
am developing what I can
with Hawk. Your friend
the rot is a tough one, but
I'm trying within the limits
of having both our heads
chopped off. Good luck with

his brother.

Personnel is still the
real cross to bear. ~~Old~~ Old
cob is just now getting a full
staff and beginning to tick
again, while job is bare and
floundering. It seems we
can replace anyone with
plenty of overlap, except
for the comparatively unimportant
categories of supervisors and
C.O.'s — We get in a
problem now and again of
wondering who we can use
just to hold a few hands
for a while, not even push
something or develop. But
why complain to you? You



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know the problem all too well.
Ed B. is working out well and
even on occasion not bursting
into your old office with his
major problem of the moment.
Colbie has gone, and is due
today in Wash for exam by
the medics; I hope to high
Heaven they fix him up
without too much of a problem.
All the Greeks are not gone
yet, though, as Andy is
still with us (until you can work
a fast op. to get him with you)
and my new secretary is a
Miss Kostakis whom I think

your brother Jim knows — she
looks good, and will keep the
right tradition alive here.
Kelly left for the silvery shores
of Hawaii and the eternal
hope of finding that 9 slot —
I hope she does — Jones
went off to the desk, well
filled with explicit instructions
to kidnap personnel anywhere
he can find them. Peter
went off in the normal roar
and confusion filled with
plans how he would steal all
our good people and unload
all the weak ones! And we
got a card from J. J. Sherry
from a Swiss mountainside



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en route to the flat lands of
Foggy Bottom. Floyd P. just
left with a tremendous send-
off from all types, and hopes
to land on the Rock - which
may work. You'll see the other
Sherry's, who left in a flood of tears and a sweat-soaked
shirt. He has postponed his
own leave to Nov (Thank
God, as I am terrified of the
chargé period), after which
he should return but maybe
just for a bit (depending I
imagine on the new Pres +
Secstate's views). He still
beats Francis a little worse
than one of the servants at

home. The Gen goes soon, and typically declined Durbin's offer of a farewell dinner. The new one I hear is nicknamed "Splithead" as he parts his hair in the middle, and is billed as just as mean as Sam but not as intelligent — sounds fine. Arthur C. is back and very much the same, and Coster really got thru the leave pretty well. And we are in the process of getting a new team of attachés, who seem OK — Only one more ^{social} note — Frank Couder finally was thrown out.



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Hope the housing is
working out and that Pityi
and the girls can join you
soon - Here are a few photos
I have been meaning to send
you. We certainly like your
house, and hope you
get one as good or almost as
good if there aren't any there
as good as this one. For
your sake, too, I hope
the social pace is slower
there and lets you concentrate
a bit more than this "gay
whirl." We certainly appreciate

your brother Tim's help in letting
you see the Acropolis later
this month on his way home
— maybe he'll see Mitya too
and give her all our regards—

Give our best too, to
various friends there — Al, of
course, in the lead. I hope
Jerry S. is bracing for the
tropical atmosphere — and
I'm ~~so~~ glad he's getting a
good indoctrination into
how it should be done à
la Natsios before he leaves;
~~it~~ maybe some of it will
stick with him. Also, our
best to Norm and family



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we're glad to see that our
interests there are in such
good hands. Finally, of
course, Ed Ryan — I hope
the division of labor has
worked out and that he
is showing that more than
one WE hand can learn
something from SE via
FE — I certainly have.

Once again — my really
shamed regrets at telling you
how things stand here and how
well the momentum you
imparted has held up. And
many thanks for lots of good

lessons, good procedures
and good friendship

Bill

PS - Re the Snarl: It's my impression
that our boys have been too tight on
this and not handled it too well -
I really mean our boy (Thomson)
more than the Flog boys. The
tight wire was set before either
you or Norm really were in
residence, & now we have such
distinguished alumni in place, I
am going to try to loosen the
wire and let you do the real
running as much as the Flog's
will let us. Main point: Don't hit
the monk too hard on this, as he
probably doesn't know too much about
it and will basically go along with us
if we don't give the impression that you and
we disagree. We'll set the new line here on the lower level,
I suggest you cover generally the desirability of your controlling ^{tactics} there
and will tie it up here when he returns.