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14 July 1961

Dear Ros:

After Alexis Johnson received your 6 June letter concerning the United States Air Force Communications Unit at [redacted] Major General Walsh, Dr. Tordella and their associates gave us an extremely helpful briefing on the station's contribution to the intelligence effort and the reasons for desiring an expanded operation there. The Department delayed its reply to your letter in order to consult with Ambassador [redacted] during his current stay in Washington.

I want you to know that the Department fully concurs in the desirability of increasing the COMINT/ELINT operations in [redacted]. The Department, therefore, is prepared to discuss with the Government of [redacted] the plan in your letter of 28 April to me, which seeks a gradual increase in the U. S. military personnel at the site to a level of approximately 1150 officers and enlisted men by the end of FY 63.

The Department's agreement to this increase is on the understanding that the [redacted] Unit will continue to operate as austere as possible, using only those personnel who are absolutely essential to carry out and support the mission of the Unit. In this connection, we have reviewed the entire dependents question in light of the political situation and the proposed increase in military personnel.

The Department

The Honorable
Roswell Gilpatric,
Deputy Secretary of Defense.

RCI-1158

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The Department fully understands and appreciates the reasons for desiring dependents at [redacted]. It was this appreciation which led the Department, with extreme reluctance, to acquiesce in June 1960 to a plan for the introduction of a limited number of families. I refer to a letter of 16 June 1960 from Deputy Under Secretary of State Hare to Assistant Secretary of Defense Irwin.

The Department believes that the June 1960 position must now be reconsidered in light of current circumstances. I am sure you share our awareness of the political sensitivity of the [redacted] area. This sensitivity, in relation to our foreign policy problems vis-a-vis [redacted] and neighboring areas, poses even greater risks today than it did a year ago. Incidents with the local population would be unavoidable with the influx of wives and children. Because of the unique and unstable situation in the [redacted] area, these incidents could be magnified all out of proportion to their actual importance and create political problems for the Unit's relations with the local population and with the Government of [redacted].

The [redacted] successes noted in your 23 April letter have been accomplished without a dependents program. We are sure you will agree that, in view of the Unit's outstanding achievements in the past and the added value anticipated for the future, we should do everything possible to avoid incidents and friction which would jeopardize the tenure and functioning of the Unit. The Department, therefore, requests that the plans for introduction of dependents into [redacted] be rescinded, and recommends that the housing under construction for the dependents program be diverted for use by the additional military personnel.

I regret that foreign policy considerations will not permit a realization of all of Defense's plans for [redacted]. But we believe that the increase in military personnel, without the introduction of dependents, offers the only sound way of realizing the intelligence gain while at the same time protecting the tenure of the station.

Sincerely,

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