

AIRGRAM

Per Peaslee
Alexander L
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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

INFO : OTTAWA

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JUL 26 4 43 PM '72

5014

FROM : Amconsul HALIFAX

RS/AN BRANCH
ANALYSIS BRANCH DATE: July 17, 1972

SUBJECT : Dissent Message: U.S. Government Responsibility for My Lai

REF : State A-3559, April 8, 1972

RELEASE IN FULL

DISSENT CHANNEL

This airgram transmits a dissenting view submitted by FSO-2 Alexander L. Peaslee, Principal Officer at this post.

"I note that procedures for retirement from the Foreign Service no longer require the retiring FSO to submit a letter to the Secretary of State outlining reasons for departure from the Service. This appears to be an unfortunate step in the direction of a further reduction of communications between officers and the Secretary. I believe it would be useful if means were retained for retiring officers to present the reasons for their action, hopefully so that the Service may profit from their comments.

"In the absence of such a channel of communication, the dissent channel is used to express this officer's unwillingness to be further associated with the actions of the executive branch of a government that initiated no steps to discipline a military unit that took action at My Lai similar to that perpetrated by the Nazis at Lidice. The steps that were taken were initiated outside of the executive branch of the United States Government and only then did the Army reluctantly move.

"In addition, there has been much testimony by Vietnam combat veterans of the eye-witness accounts of the systematic use of electrical torture, beatings, and in some cases, murder, of men, women and children, by their military units in Vietnam.

"At the Nuremberg and Tokyo war crimes trials the principle was established by the United States Government that military and public officials were responsible for war crimes committed by troops under

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FORM 4-62 DS-323

In Out

Drafted by:

ALPeaslee:alp

Contents and Classification Approved by:

ALPeaslee

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their own command. Do we practice this ourselves ?

"I vividly recall the remarks made during the 1940's about how all German officials should have protested and refused to cooperate with a government that permitted Lidice and similar actions to happen. One of my reasons for retiring at the age of 50 after 29 years of government service is that I do not want to be associated with the actions of an executive branch that takes no effective steps against atrocities too similar to those of the Nazis. I do not want to be associated with torture and murder, whether this is done by a communist or fascist government, or the executive branch of the United States Government. I particularly do not want to be associated with a government that initiates no action when babies are deliberately killed.

"A-3559 states that drafters may indicate the distribution they desire. I desire that this airgram be distributed to each Foreign Service Officer. My obvious purpose is to help create an atmosphere in which the executive branch of the United States Government will not permit its units to murder and torture. If Foreign Service and other U.S. officers made known their disgust and horror at such actions as My Lai, hopefully pressure can be developed to prevent a recurrence of such an event."

PEASLEE

NOTE: Declassify to Unclassified on August 1, 1972.

* For those who think this sort of thing always happens in war, I recommend a careful reading of the reports on My Lai of such correspondents as Seymour Hersh.

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5016

RELEASE IN FULL

July 28, 1972

Mr. Alexander L. Peaslee
1702 Burnley Avenue
Charlottesville, Virginia 22902

Dear Mr. Peaslee:

This will acknowledge receipt by the Department of State of the Dissent Channel messages you transmitted prior to your departure from Halifax. These messages have been brought to the attention of Principal Officers of the Department and the Assistant Secretaries for East Asian Affairs and European Affairs. As the Dissent Channel is intended for internal expression of views, the LOU classification of these messages will be maintained beyond August 1.

Sincerely yours,

Signed
William I. Cargo

William I. Cargo
Director
Planning and Coordination Staff