

VIETNAM AMATEUR RADIO INFORMATION
EXCHANGE

Saigon
20 June 1972

Fellow Hams:

A review of our efforts to achieve free and open amateur operation in the Republic of Viet Nam for all qualified radio amateurs is long overdue. We have been holding off in order to get the maximum amount of information out to you in one letter.

We have continued to amass documents bearing on the problem and now believe we have just about everything of significance in hand. This includes detailed references to all past legal or semi-legal amateur operations in the RVN back as far as 1965.

The Ambassador's interest in phone patching to his wife, who is the U.S. Ambassador to Nepal, has caused him to turn his attention to amateur radio, since it is the only means of communication in existence whereby he can actually converse with her. When informed that any station on this end handling such traffic would be illegal unless an RVN amateur license was obtained, the Ambassador directed the Counsellor of Embassy for Administrative Affairs, Mr. Colantonio, to obtain the required license from the GVN.

Mr. Riebhoff had the opportunity to brief Mr. Colantonio on the amateur situation before he had meetings with the Director of the RVN's PTT to this end. As a result, Mr. Colantonio went to the PTT with three proposals:

1. A proposal to open amateur radio to all qualified U.S. personnel, having in their possession a valid U.S. amateur license, to be effected by the signing of a reciprocal operating agreement.
2. A proposal to forward the required documentation to the International Telecommunications Union, Geneva (ITU), which would have the effect of withdrawing Viet Nam from the international "banned list".
3. A specific proposal to license one station immediately for the Ambassador's purposes.

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The Director of PTT, Mr. Lan, rejected the first proposal for the time being; was non-committal about the second; and, after being assured of the Ambassador's personal interest, approved the third. He also sent the required letter to I.T.U. specifically covering XV5AC.

As a result, the GVN has licensed one station, XV5AC, as the equivalent of a U.S. Embassy club station, with Mr. John Lunsford, W4EVC, the Embassy's Communication and Electronics Officer as the individual responsible for the station's proper operation.

Mr. Lunsford visited Washington recently and hand-carried the station documentation with him to FCC, where he presented it to Mr. Ray Spence, W4QAW, Chief Engineer. As a result of the documentation and their discussions, FCC has lifted the ban on contacts by US amateurs with XV5AC. This also means that XV5AC contacts are valid for DXCC. In order to demonstrate graphically the FCC's action, W4QAW himself was the first contact made by XV5AC, this taking place on 17 June. This was the first legal QSO between stations in the RVN & USA in six years.

This milestone does not end our quest for the eventual obtaining of operating permission for other American, TCN, or Vietnamese personnel, be they military or civilian.

At the instigation of Mr. Robert Brougham, WA7QDG, USAID/PSD, Mr. Brougham, Mr. Laun, and Mr. Riebhoff were able to meet with BG F. H. Trogdon, MACV Assistant Chief of Staff for Communications/Electronics, on 2 May. At this meeting we requested a review of MACV's policy on amateur radio, leading, hopefully, to the rescission of MACV 105-6, which prohibits U.S. uniformed personnel and their dependents from operating amateur radio in the RVN. BG. Trogdon spent considerable time with us and later appointed a staff member to discuss the matter with us in even greater detail. Though we had hoped to hear about the results of this study by now, nothing has been forthcoming. The NVA offensive has undoubtedly caused official attention to be diverted to higher priority matters, but we hope to continue discussions toward this end in a frequent and regular manner until a decision is reached.

Our discussions with PTT will continue on more than one level. Mr. George Johnson, ex-W8EVD, USAID Advisor to the PTT, has had a series of discussions with various PTT officials, including those most opposed to amateur radio, with the idea of changing their attitudes towards the matter. These discussions, we hope, will lead to a demonstration of amateur radio for the PTT officials who are not familiar with it. We

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are also proposing that PTT issue amateur licenses to some of their own officials so that these officials can take part in the hobby themselves. To a certain extent, we will offer to provide the required ham gear to make this possible.

Mr. Lunsford, meanwhile, continues to work with the PTT officials on the Embassy level in order to attempt to gain greater operating privileges and more station licenses.

XV5AC is available to all who would care to operate it, if they have a valid license from their home country, on a limited basis for the present. This is in line with our original objective that all qualified personnel should be able to enjoy amateur radio while here in the RVN. Those of you who wish to take advantage of this should call Don Riebhoff at 927-0121 ext. 2216 several days in advance of the date you wish to operate the station. Phone patching, except to Nepal, is not permitted.

Some of you may know other amateurs who are not aware of these activities. It will be appreciated if you will pass the word to them.

Rest assured that we are continuing to work toward the goals we originally set out to achieve, and we endeavor to keep you informed of all developments.

Very 73,

Don Riebhoff K7CBZ
Embassy Telecoms

Alfred "Fred" Laun W9SZR
Director PSYOPS MR III