

UNITED STATES ARMY  
THE CHIEF OF STAFF

Lieutenant General James A. Williams  
Director  
Defense Intelligence Agency  
Washington, D. C. 20301

1/8/85

Dear Jim:

Thanks for your helpful suggestions on improving our Army Attaches.

We do need to key on career development for attaches. I have emphasized to our selection boards that they should recognize the special talents and career patterns of Foreign Area Officers. The emphasis is paying dividends. For several years, selection rates to Lieutenant Colonel have been well above the Army average, and on the last two lists they exceeded the average for selection to Colonel. On the last two Senior Service College lists, Foreign Area Officers were selected at a rate above the Army average. The next Colonel selection board will receive specific guidance that highlights the importance of attache duty in evaluating the potential of Foreign Area Officers. I intend to look closely at extending that guidance to Senior Service College boards.

Assignment officers in MILPERCEN note that attache duty, of itself, does not put an officer at a disadvantage for selection; it is the Officer Efficiency Reports received from other Service officers in the Defense Attache System that create the greatest potential for non-selection. Since another Service's evaluation system is difficult to appreciate, officers from MILPERCEN will brief each new attache class, beginning 26 February.

We have effectively publicized the opportunities for service as attaches. Generally, our Foreign Area Officers consider attache duty to be the most prestigious, and professionally challenging of the Foreign Area Officer positions. The perception that attache duty affords the officer the opportunity to display his entire range of Foreign Area Officer talents reinforces this view. Assignment officers report that up-and-coming young Foreign Area Officers seek these assignments.

The Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans is taking another look at how the Army can improve the Foreign Area Officer program. We must develop an officer who has the right blend of area, language, and politico-military skills, while remaining professionally competent as a soldier. In most cases, we are doing this now and can continue without disrupting the officer's education as a Foreign Area Officer. The consistent cooperation of DIA and the Defense Attache System in supporting the Foreign Area Officer program, particularly the help attaches provide in the in-country travel and study programs, has been invaluable in this success story.

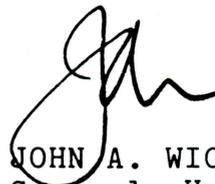
Since the Air Force and the Navy do not have a program similar to our Foreign Area Officer program, their attache interview system appears worthwhile. However, our procedure for identifying candidates for attache positions is comprehensive and works without inconveniencing the officer and his family with a required visit to Washington.

We do not discourage officers from serving more than one attache tour. The Foreign Area Officer program gives officers the opportunity to serve several tours overseas in attache positions, security assistance positions, or on joint staffs. Ideally, we bring the officer back to serve on a staff or with troops between attache assignments, capitalizing on his experience abroad.

The Army supports your efforts to improve the attache program and the conditions under which attaches and their families serve. I shall show my personal support by providing a signed photo for each Army Attache at the beginning of his tour.

Again, thanks for your suggestions. We share a common commitment to a quality attache system.

Most sincerely,



JOHN A. WICKHAM, JR.  
General, United States Army  
Chief of Staff