

29 October 1963

WASH [REDACTED]

PASS FOLL IMMEDIATE MSG

~~TOP SECRET~~

**EYES ONLY**



VIA CAS SAIGON 2040 FROM AMBASSADOR LODGE DTG 29/1030Z

TO SECSTATE WASH EYES ONLY FOR RUSK, HARRIMAN, BALL, HILSMAN, HUGHES  
OSD EYES ONLY FOR MCNAMARA, GILPATRIC, TAYLOR, KRULAK, MR. WM. BUNNY  
WHITE HOUSE/EYES ONLY MCGEORGE BUNNY

25X1A INFO [REDACTED] FOR ADM FELT EYES ONLY  
CIA/EYES ONLY MCCONE, CARTER, HELMS

1. I HAVE REVIEWED THE FOLLOWING FACTORS WHICH APPEAR TO  
ME TO BE PARTICULARLY RELEVANT IN A BALANCED EXAMINATION OF THE  
POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FACTORS AFFECTING THE CHANCES OF A  
SUCCESSFUL COUP D'ETAT:

25X1C A. OF IMMEDIATE CONCERN IS THE APPARENT LACK OF  
DETAIL FURNISHED BY [REDACTED] BOTH WITH REGARD TO  
THE MILITARY UNITS TO BE INVOLVED AND THE POLITICO/  
PSYWAR SIDE. THIS APPEARS TO ME TO BE AT LEAST IN  
PART EXPLAINED BY THE GENERALS' RETICENCE TO REVEAL  
THESE DETAILS AT THIS POINT AND BECAUSE OF WHAT MUST  
BE A MUCH GREATER REGARD FOR SECURITY THAN WAS THE  
CASE IN AUGUST. THE GENERALS ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE A

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AUTHORITY RAC-Vietnam State Dept. Guidelines  
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CERTAIN AMOUNT OF COMPARTMENTATION AND DIVISION OF LABOR AMONG THE PRINCIPALS WHICH ON BALANCE SHOULD WORK TO OUR ADVANTAGE.

B. THE ACKNOWLEDGED INVOLVEMENT OF GENERAL DINH IS AN EXTREMELY VARIABLE FACTOR. THE GENERALS SEEM ACUTELY AWARE OF THIS AND [REDACTED] STATES THAT THEY HAVE HIM UNDER TWENTY-FOUR HOUR A DAY SURVEILLANCE AND ARE PREPARED TO NEUTRALIZE HIM AT ANY TIME SHOULD HE KICK OVER THE TRACES.

C. THE POSSIBILITY OF A PREMATURE, UNRELATED AND PRECIPITATE COUP BY COL PHAM NGOC THAO OR OTHERS LOOMS LARGE AS A NEGATIVE FACTOR. AGAIN, THE GENERALS APPEAR COMPLETELY AWARE OF THIS AND AS YOU KNOW, WE HAVE NEVER BEEN PARTICULARLY SANGUINE THAT THAO HAS THIS CAPABILITY.

D. KNOWLEDGE OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF CERTAIN CIVILIAN OPPOSITIONIST ELEMENTS NOTABLY, BUI DIEM, WHO HAS STATED THAT HE IS LIAISON BETWEEN GENERAL KIM AND CIVILIAN LEADERS, PROBABLY DANG VAN SUNG AND PHAN HUY QUAT, REPRESENTS BOTH A POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FACTOR. ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE, IT REPRESENTS AN EXTENSION OF KNOWLEDGE WEAKENING THE SECURITY ELEMENT BUT ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, IT INDICATES AN

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AWARENESS OF THE NECESSITY OF CIVILIAN POLITICAL INCLUSION AND THE FACT THAT AS [REDACTED] HAS STATED IT IS NOT INTENDED TO ESTABLISH A MILITARY JUNTA. TRAN TRUNG DUNG'S KNOWLEDGE AND PROBABLE INVOLVEMENT DESPITE HIS DISCLAIMER, FURTHER INDICATES INTENTION TO FORM CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT, PROBABLY WITHIN FRAME OF REFERENCE OF CONSTITUTIONAL SUCCESSION.

25X1

E. I AM DISTURBED OVER THE REPORTED DISCUSSION OF COL NGUYEN KHUONG'S APPROACHES TO U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL WITHOUT THE AUTHORIZATION OF THE COUP PRINCIPALS. IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT KHUONG'S ROLE WAS OBSCURE IN THE AUGUST COUP ACTIVITIES. [REDACTED] HAS STATED THAT THE COUP PRINCIPALS WOULD DISCIPLINE KHUONG AND THAT HE HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM THE SCENE.

25X1

F. IT WOULD SEEM TO ME THAT THE EXISTENCE OF AN IMMINENT COUP ATMOSPHERE WOULD REDUCE THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE NECESSARY FOR THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF A COUP D'ETAT. THIS COUP ATMOSPHERE HAS PERTAINED, HOWEVER, FOR SEVERAL MONTHS WHICH WOULD TEND TO REDUCE THE STATE OF READINESS FOR COUNTERING SUCH A COUP ATTEMPT. WE HAVE SOME INFORMATION THAT COUNTER-COUP COMBAT ELEMENTS HAVE BEEN SUBORNED. THE FACT THAT THE

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COUP PRINCIPALS REMAIN AS THE RESPONSIBLE MILITARY  
AUTHORITY ENHANCES BOTH THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITY  
TO DISPOSE THE UNITS BOTH FOR AND AGAINST.

2. ADDITIONAL FACTORS WHICH SHOULD BE NOTED ARE:

A. TO DATE THE GENERALS HAVE NOT INDICATED  
EITHER A DESIRE FOR OR DEPENDENCE ON OUR SUPPORT  
OR ACTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF A COUP.  
ON THE CONTRARY, THE GENERALS HAVE REPEATEDLY DEMANDED  
THE LEAST POSSIBLE AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT.

B. ALTHOUGH WE ARE WELL AWARE OF THE PROFUNDITY  
OF STUDENT AND BUDDHIST DISSIDENCE AND UNREST AND  
EVEN ABILITY TO UNDERTAKE CERTAIN LIMITED ACTION, WE  
DO NOT KNOW OF ANY PLANS TO UTILIZE THESE ELEMENTS  
AND OF COURSE CANNOT CALCULATE THE EXTENT OF SPONTANEOUS  
ACTION THEY MIGHT UNDERTAKE.

C. ACTION TAKEN WITH RESPECT TO THE COMMERCIAL  
IMPORT PROGRAM AND THE SEVERENCE OF SUPPORT OF  
CERTAIN ELEMENTS UNDER COL TUNG HAVE CREATED A COUP  
ATMOSPHERE AND SOME DETERIORATION IN THE ECONOMIC  
SITUATION CHARACTERIZED BY THE FLUCTUATION OF THE  
PIASTRE VALUE, THE DISAPPEARANCE OF GOLD ON THE  
MARKET, AND THE RISING PRICES OF CONSUMER COMMODITIES.

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D. PLEASE NOTE [REDACTED] DOES NOT WANT ME TO CHANGE DATE OF MY DEPARTURE FOR WASHINGTON. WE ARE REVIEWING WHOLE SITUATION WEDNESDAY NIGHT TO SEE WHETHER CHANGE MY DEPARTURE IS JUSTIFIED.

3. A POINT WHICH MUST BE COMPLETELY UNDERSTOOD IS THAT WE ARE NOT ENGINEERING THIS COUP. THE SUM TOTAL OF OUR RELATIONSHIP THUS FAR IS: THAT WE WILL NOT THWART A COUP; THAT WE WILL MONITOR AND REPORT; AND THAT CONEIN'S LONG STANDING FRIENDSHIP WITH [REDACTED] MAY BE A REAL HELP. ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN NO REQUESTS TO DATE BY THE GENERALS FOR MATERIAL OR FINANCIAL SUPPORT, WE MUST ANTICIPATE THAT SUCH REQUESTS MAY BE FORTHCOMING.

4. IN SUMMARY, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT A COUP ATTEMPT BY THE GENERALS' GROUP IS IMMINENT; THAT WHETHER THIS COUP FAILS OR SUCCEEDS, THE USG MUST BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE FACT THAT WE WILL BE BLAMED, HOWEVER UNJUSTIFIABLY; AND FINALLY, THAT NO POSITIVE ACTION BY THE USG CAN PREVENT A COUP ATTEMPT SHORT OF INFORMING DIEM AND NHU WITH ALL THE OPPROBRIUM THAT SUCH AN ACTION WOULD ENTAIL. NOTE TOO [REDACTED] STATEMENT WE WILL ONLY HAVE FOUR HOURS NOTICE. THIS RULES OUT MY CHECKING WITH YOU BETWEEN TIME I LEARN OF COUP AND TIME THAT IT STARTS. IT MEANS U.S. WILL NOT BE ABLE SIGNIFICANTLY TO INFLUENCE COURSE OF EVENT.

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