

~~TOP SECRET~~

30 October 1963

25X1A WASH [REDACTED]

PASS FOL FLASH MSG

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EYES ONLY

VIA CAS SAIGON-2063 FROM AMBASSADOR LODGE DTG: 30/1030Z

TO SECSTATE WASH EYES ONLY FOR RUSK, HARRIMAN, BALL, HILSMAN, HUGHES
OSD EYES ONLY FOR MCNAMARA, GILPATRIC, TAYLOR, KRULAK, MR. WM. BUNDY

WHITE HOUSE/EYES ONLY MCGEORGE BUNDY

25X1A

INFO [REDACTED] FOR ADM FELT EYES ONLY

CIA/EYES ONLY MCCONE, CARTER, HELMS

REF: CAS WASHINGTON 79109

1. WE MUST, OF COURSE, GET BEST POSSIBLE ESTIMATE OF CHANCE
OF COUP'S SUCCESS AND THIS ESTIMATE MUST COLOR OUR THINKING BUT
DO NOT THINK WE HAVE THE POWER TO DELAY OR DISCOURAGE A COUP.
DON HAS MADE IT CLEAR MANY TIMES THAT THIS IS A VIETNAMESE AFFAIR.
IT IS THEORETICALLY POSSIBLE FOR US TO TURN OVER THE INFORMATION
WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO US IN CONFIDENCE TO DIEM AND THIS WOULD
UNDOUBTEDLY STOP THE COUP AND WOULD MAKE TRAITORS OUT OF US. FOR
PRACTICAL PURPOSES, THEREFORE, I WOULD SAY THAT WE HAVE VERY
LITTLE INFLUENCE ON WHAT IS ESSENTIALLY A VIETNAMESE AFFAIR. IN
ADDITION, THIS WOULD PLACE THE HEADS OF THE GENERALS, THEIR CIVILIAN
SUPPORTERS, AND LOWER MILITARY OFFICERS ON THE BLOCK, THEREBY
SACRIFICING A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THE CIVILIAN AND MILITARY

Presidential Library review of State equities required

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DECLASSIFIED

AUTHORITY RAC-Vietnam, State Dept Guideline

BY KBH NLF, DATE 11/1/01

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LEADERSHIP NEEDED TO CARRY THE WAR AGAINST THE VC TO ITS SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION. AFTER OUR EFFORTS NOT TO DISCOURAGE A COUP AND THIS CHANGE OF HEART, WE WOULD FORECLOSE ANY POSSIBILITY OF CHANGE OF THE GVN FOR THE BETTER. DIEM/NHU HAVE DISPLAYED NO INTENTIONS TO DATE OF A DESIRE TO CHANGE THE TRADITIONAL METHODS OF CONTROL THROUGH POLICE ACTION OR TAKE ANY ACTIONS WHICH WOULD UNDERMINE THE POWER POSITION OR SOLIDARITY OF THE NGO FAMILY. THIS, DESPITE OUR HEAVY PRESSURES DIRECTED DEPTTEL 534. IF OUR ATTEMPT TO THWART THIS COUP WERE SUCCESSFUL, WHICH WE DOUBT, IT IS OUR FIRM ESTIMATE THAT YOUNGER OFFICERS, SMALL GROUPS OF MILITARY, WOULD THEN ENGAGE IN AN ABORTIVE ACTION CREATING CHAOS IDEALLY SUITED TO VC OBJECTIVES

2. WHILE WE WILL ATTEMPT A COMBINED ASSESSMENT IN A FOLLOWING MESSAGE, TIME HAS NOT YET PERMITTED SUBSTANTIVE EXAMINATION OF THIS MATTER WITH GENERAL HARKINS. MY GENERAL VIEW IS THAT THE U.S. IS TRYING TO BRING THIS MEDIEVAL COUNTRY INTO THE 20TH CENTURY AND THAT WE HAVE MADE CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS IN MILITARY AND ECONOMIC WAYS BUT TO GAIN VICTORY WE MUST ALSO BRING THEM INTO THE 20TH CENTURY POLITICALLY AND THAT CAN ONLY BE DONE BY EITHER A THOROUGH GOING CHANGE IN THE BEHAVIOR OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT OR BY ANOTHER GOVERNMENT. THE VIET CONG PROBLEM IS PARTLY MILITARY BUT IT IS ALSO PARTLY PSYCHOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL.

3. WITH RESPECT TO PARA 3 REF, I BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD CONTINUE OUR PRESENT POSTURE OF KEEPING HANDS OFF BUT CONTINUE TO MONITOR AND PRESS FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION. CAS HAS BEEN



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ANALYZING POTENTIAL COUP FORCES FOR SOME TIME AND IT IS THEIR ESTIMATE THAT THE GENERALS HAVE PROBABLY FIGURED THEIR CHANCES PRETTY CLOSELY AND PROBABLY ALSO EXPECT THAT ONCE THEY BEGIN TO MOVE, NOT ONLY PLANNED UNITS, BUT OTHER UNITS WILL JOIN THEM. WE BELIEVE THAT VIETNAM'S BEST GENERALS ARE INVOLVED IN DIRECTING THIS EFFORT. IF THEY CAN'T PULL IT OFF, IT IS DOUBTFUL OTHER MILITARY LEADERSHIP COULD DO SO SUCCESSFULLY. IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT THE GENERALS WOULD BE RETICENT TO REVEAL FULL DETAILS OF THEIR PLAN FOR FEAR OF LEAKS TO THE GVN.

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4. RE PARA 4 REF, WE EXPECT THAT CONEIN WILL MEET [REDACTED] ON THE NIGHT OF 30 OCT OR EARLY MORNING 31 OCT. WE AGREE WITH PARA 4 REF THAT WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR DETAILS AND QUESTION [REDACTED] AS TO HIS ESTIMATE OF THE RELATIVE STRENGTHS OF OPPOSING FORCES. WE DO NOT BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT WE SHOULD SHOW ANY SIGNS OF ATTEMPTING TO DIRECT THIS AFFAIR OURSELVES OR OF GIVING THE IMPRESSION OF SECOND THOUGHTS ON THIS VIETNAMESE INITIATIVE. IN THE MEANTIME, WE WILL RESPOND SPECIFICALLY TO CAS WASHINGTON 79126. PLEASE NOTE THAT CAS SAIGON 2059 CORRECTS CAS SAIGON 2023 AND TWO REGIMENTS OF THE 7TH DIVISION ARE INCLUDED IN THE COUP FORCES.

5. APPARENTLY PARA 5 REF OVERLOOKS CAS SAIGON 1445, 5 OCT 1963 WHICH GAVE AN ACCOUNT OF THE FACE TO FACE MEETING OF [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] AND CONEIN AT [REDACTED] INSTIGATION AND THROUGH THE SPECIFIC ARRANGEMENT OF [REDACTED] SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED

25X1C



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25X1C

AS PARTICIPATING IN A PLAN TO CHANGE THE GOVERNMENT.

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PLEASE NOTE THAT REMARKS PARALLEL IN EVERY WAY THE LATER

25X1C

STATEMENTS OF WE BELIEVE THAT THE LIMITATION OF CONTACT

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TO AND CONEIN IS AN APPROPRIATE SECURITY MEASURE CONSONANT WITH OUR URGING THAT THE SMALLEST NUMBER OF PERSONS BE AWARE OF THESE DETAILS.

25X1

6. WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT WISE TO ASK THAT PASS HIS PLANS TO GEN STILWELL. THE VIETNAMESE BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE MEMBERS OF THE U.S. MILITARY WHO LEAK TO THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM. I DO NOT DOUBT THAT THIS IS AN UNJUST SUSPICION BUT IT IS A FACT THAT THIS SUSPICION EXISTS AND THERE IS NO USE IN PRETENDING THAT IT DOES NOT.

7. I MUCH APPRECIATE YOUR FURNISHING THE BERTH EQUIPPED MILITARY AIRCRAFT WHICH I TRUST IS A JET. I INTEND TO TELL PAN AMERICAN THAT A JET HAS BEEN DIVERTED FOR MY USE AND THEREFORE I WILL NO LONGER NEED THEIR SERVICES. THIS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY LEAK TO THE NEWSPAPERS AND THE GVN MAY STUDY THIS MOVE WITH SOME SUSPICION. I WILL ANSWER ANY INQUIRIES ON THIS SCORE TO THE EFFECT THAT I AM MOST PLEASED BY THIS ATTENTION AND THAT THIS IS OBVIOUSLY DONE AS A MEASURE TO INSURE MY COMFORT AND SAVE MY TIME. TO ALLAY SUSPICIONS FURTHER, I WILL OFFER SPACE ON THE AIRCRAFT TO MACV FOR EMERGENCY LEAVE CASES, ETC., AND HANDLE THIS IN AS ROUTINE FASHION AS POSSIBLE. I WISH TO RESERVE COMMENT AS TO MY ACTUAL TIME OF DEPARTURE UNTIL I HAVE SOME ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, HOPEFULLY TOMORROW.

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8. YOUR PARA 7 SOMEWHAT PERPLEXES ME. IT DOES NOT SEEM SENSIBLE TO HAVE THE MILITARY IN CHARGE OF A MATTER WHICH IS SO PROFOUNDLY POLITICAL AS A CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT. IN FACT, I WOULD SAY TO DO THIS WOULD PROBABLY BE THE END OF ANY HOPE FOR A CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT HERE. THIS IS SAID IMPERSONALLY AS A GENERAL PROPOSITION, SINCE GEN HARKINS IS A SPLENDID GENERAL AND AN OLD FRIEND OF MINE TO WHOM I WOULD GLADLY ENTRUST ANYTHING I HAVE. I ASSUME THAT THE EMBASSY AND MACV ARE ABLE TO HANDLE NORMAL ACTIVITIES UNDER A, THAT CAS CAN CONTINUE COUP CONTACTS UNDER B, AND AS REGARDS, C, WE MUST SIMPLY DO THE VERY BEST WE CAN IN THE LIGHT OF EVENTS AFTER THE COUP HAS STARTED.

9. WE APPRECIATE THE STEPS TAKEN AS OUTLINED IN PARA 8. HOWEVER, WE SHOULD REMEMBER THAT THE GVN IS NOT TOTALLY INEPT IN ITS FOREIGN SOUNDINGS AND THAT THESE MOVES SHOULD BE AS DISCREET AND SECURITY CONSCIOUS AS POSSIBLE. I WOULD, OF COURSE, CALL FOR THESE FORCES ONLY IN CASE OF EXTREME NECESSITY SINCE MY HOPE COINCIDES WITH THE GENERALS THAT THIS WILL BE AN ALL VIETNAMESE AFFAIR.

10. WE ANTICIPATE THAT AT THE OUTSET OF THE COUP, UNLESS IT MOVES WITH LIGHTNING SWIFTNESS, THE GVN WILL REQUEST ME OR GEN HARKINS TO USE OUR INFLUENCE TO CALL IT OFF. I BELIEVE OUR RESPONSE TO THIS SHOULD BE THAT OUR INFLUENCE CERTAINLY COULD NOT BE SUPERIOR TO THAT OF THE PRESIDENT, WHO IS COMMANDER IN CHIEF,



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AND THAT IF HE IS UNABLE TO CALL IT OFF, WE WOULD CERTAINLY BE UNABLE TO DO SO AND WOULD MERELY BE RISKING AMERICAN LIVES ATTEMPTING TO INTERFERE IN THIS VIETNAMESE PROBLEM. THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT REQUEST AIRCRAFT, HELICOPTERS, FOR THE EVACUATION OF KEY PERSONALITIES. THIS WOULD HAVE TO BE STUDIED CLOSELY, BUT WE WOULD CERTAINLY NOT COMMIT OUR PLANES AND PILOTS BETWEEN THE BATTLE LINES OF THE OPPOSING FORCES. WE SHOULD, RATHER, STATE THAT WE WOULD BE WILLING TO ACT IN THIS FASHION DURING A TRUCE IN WHICH BOTH SIDES AGREE TO THE REMOVAL OF KEY PERSONALITIES. I BELIEVE THAT THERE WOULD BE IMMEDIATE POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN ATTEMPTING TO TAKE THESE PERSONALITIES TO ANOTHER NEIGHBORING COUNTRY AND PROBABLY WE WOULD BE BEST SERVED IN DEPOSITING THEM IN SAIPAN WHERE THE ABSENCE OF PRESS, COMMUNICATIONS, ETC., WOULD ALLOW US SOME LEEWAY TO MAKE A FURTHER DECISION AS TO THEIR ULTIMATE DISPOSITION. IF SENIOR VIETNAMESE PERSONALITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES REQUESTED ASYLUM IN THE EMBASSY OR OTHER AMERICAN INSTALLATIONS, WE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO GRANT IT IN LIGHT OF OUR PREVIOUS ACTION WITH RESPECT TO TRI QUANG. THIS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY PRESENT LATER PROBLEMS BUT HOPEFULLY THE NEW GOVERNMENT MIGHT FEEL DISPOSED TO HELP US SOLVE THIS PROBLEM. NATURALLY ASYLUM WOULD BE GRANTED ON THE SAME BASIS AS THE BUDDHISTS, I.E., PHYSICAL PRESENCE AT THE EMBASSY OR OTHER LOCATION.

11. AS TO REQUESTS FROM THE GENERALS, THEY MAY WELL HAVE NEED OF FUNDS AT THE LAST MOMENT WITH WHICH TO BUY OFF POTENTIAL



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OPPOSITION. TO THE EXTENT THAT THESE FUNDS CAN BE PASSED DIS-
CREETLY, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD FURNISH THEM PROVIDED WE ARE CONVINCED
THAT THE PROPOSED COUP IS SUFFICIENTLY WELL ORGANIZED TO HAVE A
GOOD CHANCE OF SUCCESS. IF THEY ARE SUCCESSFUL, THEY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY
ASK FOR PROMPT RECOGNITION AND SOME ASSURANCE THAT MILITARY AND
ECONOMIC AID WILL CONTINUE AT NORMAL LEVEL. WE SHOULD BE PREPARED
TO MAKE THESE STATEMENTS IF THE ISSUE IS CLEARCUT, PREDICATING OUR
POSITION ON THE PRESIDENT'S STATED DESIRE TO CONTINUE THE WAR
AGAINST THE VC TO FINAL VICTORY. VOA MIGHT BE AN IMPORTANT MEANS
OF DISSEMINATING THIS MESSAGE. SHOULD THE COUP FAIL, WE WILL HAVE
TO PICK UP THE PIECES AS BEST WE CAN AT THAT TIME. WE HAVE A
COMMITMENT TO THE GENERALS FROM THE AUGUST EPISODE TO ATTEMPT
TO HELP IN THE EVACUATION OF THEIR DEPENDENTS. WE SHOULD TRY TO
LIVE UP TO THIS IF CONDITIONS WILL PERMIT. AMERICAN COMPLICITY
WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE CHARGED AND THERE MIGHT BE SOME ACTS TAKEN
AGAINST SPECIFIC PERSONALITIES WHICH WE SHOULD ANTICIPATE AND
MAKE PROVISION AGAINST AS BEST WE CAN. SHOULD THE COUP PROVE
INDECISIVE AND A PROTRACTED STRUGGLE IS IN PROGRESS, WE SHOULD
PROBABLY OFFER OUR GOOD OFFICES TO HELP RESOLVE THE ISSUE IN THE
INTEREST OF THE WAR AGAINST THE VC. THIS MIGHT HOLD SOME BENEFIT
IN TERMS OF CONCESSIONS BY THE GVN. WE WILL NATURALLY INCUR SOME
OPPROBIUM FROM BOTH SIDES IN OUR ROLE AS MEDIATOR. HOWEVER, THIS
OPPROBIUM WOULD PROBABLY BE LESS DISTASTEFUL THAN A DEADLOCK WHICH

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WOULD OPEN THE DOOR TO THE VC. WE CONSIDER SUCH A DEADLOCK AS THE LEAST LIKELY POSSIBILITY OF THE THREE.

12. AS REGARDS YOUR PARA 10, I DO NOT KNOW WHAT MORE PROOF CAN BE OFFERED THAN THE FACT THESE MEN ARE OBVIOUSLY PREPARED TO RISK THEIR LIVES AND THAT THEY WANT NOTHING FOR THEMSELVES.

25X1C IF I AM ANY JUDGE OF HUMAN NATURE, [REDACTED] FACE EXPRESSED SINCERITY AND DETERMINATION ON THE MORNING THAT I SPOKE TO HIM. HEARTILY AGREE THAT A MISCALCULATION COULD JEOPARDIZE POSITION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. WE ALSO RUN TREMENDOUS RISKS BY DOING NOTHING. IF WE WERE CONVINCED THAT THE COUP WAS GOING TO FAIL, WE WOULD, OF COURSE, DO EVERYTHING WE COULD TO STOP IT.

13. GEN HARKINS HAS READ THIS AND DOES NOT CONCUR.



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