

FM HARKINS, SAIGON
TO TAYLOR, CJCS, WASHINGTON
INFO FELT, CINCPAC

ZEM

~~TOP SECRET~~

JCS Declassification/Release Instructions
on File

MAC 1566 EYES ONLY

REF JCS 3385-63

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AMPLIFICATION STATEMENTS IN MY MACV 1557 FOLLOWS:

A. BY REFERENCE TO DIE BEING CAST I MEANT THAT GENERALS HAVE RECEIVED ASSURANCE OF U.S. SUPPORT IN THEIR PROJECTED TASK OF REMOVAL OF NHUS FROM POSITION OF INFLUENCE. SHOULD WE WITHOLD SUCH SUPPORT U.S./RVN RELATIONS WOULD BE ESTRANGED INDEFINITELY AND FUTURE EFFECTIVENESS U.S. SUPPORT PROGRAMS IN VIETNAM WOULD BE ZERO. WITHOLDING PREVIOUSLY PROFFERED SUPPORT WOULD CONSTITUTE BREACH OF FAITH AND WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY RESULT IN FAILURE OF VIETNAMESE TO EVER AGAIN BE ABLE TO PLACE CREDENCE IN OFFICIAL U.S. STATEMENTS OR COMMITMENTS. AMPLIFICATION MY VIEWS WITH REGARD GOING DIRECT TO DIEM PRIOR TO ENCOURAGING THE COUP CONTAINED IN PARA C BELOW.

B. GENERALS WILL NOT MOVE WITHOUT U.S. SUPPORT AND UNTIL DETAILED TACTICAL PLANS ARE DRAWN, AND FORCES ALIGNED. THE STATUS OF PLANS, IF ANY, AT THE MOMENT ARE EXTREMELY WELL GUARDED SECRETS FROM U.S. MILITARY AUTHORITY. THEY ARE LIKELY TO REMAIN SO. THERE ARE SO MANY RUMORS FLYING AROUND THAT PIECEMEAL LEAKS MAY WELL BE INCONSEQUENTIAL. PLOTTERS HAVE KEPT THEIR NUMBER TO AN ABSOLUTE MINIMUM, APPARENTLY. A PROBLEM FACING THE GENERALS AND ARGUING AGAINST PRECIPITATE ACTION ON THEIR PART IS I BELIEVE THEIR GENUINE PATRIOTIC DESIRE TO ACCOMPLISH THEIR ENDS WITH ABSOLUTE MINIMUM OF BLOODSHED AND DAMAGE. IF GENERALS CAN LINE UP OVERWHELMING STRENGTH TO GUARANTEE QUICK RELATIVELY PAINLESS DESISION, I BELIEVE THEY WILL DO SO AT THE COST OF A FEW DAYS TIME. IN MEANTIME BELIEVE ONLY DANGER OF RASH OR PREMATURE

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AUTHORITY RAC-Vietnam

BY KBH DATE 4/7/01

ACTS LIES WITH PRO NHU FORCES IF THEY SEE INTOLERANT BALANCE OF POWER LINING UP AGAINST THEM. SUCH RASH ACTION SEEMS UNLIKELY YET. THE SECURITY OF KEY GENERALS IS GOOD, EXCEPT FOR BIG MINH WHO IS NOT PHYSICALLY LOCATED AT JGS. BELIEVE THAT AS LONG AS BIG MINH MOVES ABOUT OPENLY, THE NHU FORCES DO NOT DARE ELIMINATE HIM. IN THE MEANTIME OPPORTUNITY IS OPEN TO PERSUADE DIEM TO REMOVE NHU'S.

C. IN MY VIEW, WE CAN AND SHOULD BRING FURTHER PRESSURE ON DIEM CONCURRENT WITH CONTINUED NEGOTIATIONS WITH GENERALS. THE TWO APPROACHES ARE NOT INCOMPATIBLE PROVIDED WE INFORM THE GENERALS IN ADVANCE OF OUR ULTIMATUMS, BEING PRESENTED DIEM. I BELIEVE THAT AMBASSADOR SHOULD IMMEDIATELY MAKE FIRM EFFORT, REPEATED AS NECESSARY, TO CONVINCE DIEM TO SEND THE NHUS ABROAD, AS PRIVATE CITIZENS, AS CONDITION FOR CONTINUED U.S. SUPPORT OF HIS REGIME. AMB COULD REINFORCE DEMARCHE BY REF WORLD CONDEMNATION OF VIETNAM OVER BUDDHIST REPRISALS WHICH ALL BELIEVE ENGINEERED BY NHUS. DIEM MAY WELL REFUSE BUT HIS REFUSAL OF THIS DIRECT ULTIMATUM, OFTEN CONSIDERED BUT NEVER BEFORE ADVANCED, WILL CERTAINLY STIFFEN OUR RESOLVE TO BACK THE GENERALS AS THE ONLY REMAINING COURSE OF ACTION. MOREOVER, SHOULD THIS APPROACH, AND THE POSSIBILITY THAT DIEM MAY ACCEPT, FORCE NHU TO ATTEMPT HIS OWN COUP, THE POSITION OF THE GENERALS COUP GROUP WILL BE STRENGTHENED MILITARILY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY IN ANY COUNTER-COUP ACTION.

AMBASSADOR DOES NOT CONCUR IN THIS APPROACH. MY THOUGHT IS WE SHOULD DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE AND LEAVE NO COURSE OF ACTION UNTRIED IN OUR EFFORTS TO SOLVE THE PRESENT DILEMA WITHOUT BLOODSHED.

D. AS TO WHAT ROLE CAN I PLAY I MIGHT TRY ASSIST AMB LODGE IN



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APPLYING PRESSURE ON DIEM BY INDICATING HOW PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS
IS DETRIMENTAL TO WAR EFFORT WHICH HAS BEEN GOING SO WELL. ATTEMPT
AT THIS TIME ON MY PART TO SEE BIG MINH WOULD I BELIEVE ONLY PUT THE
FINGER ON HIM. YOU WILL NOTE FROM [REDACTED] 25X1A MINH HAS ADVISED
OF EXISTANCE SPECIAL FORCES COMPANY "ACCIDENTALLY" STATIONED BY HIS

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25X1A

QUARTERS. [REDACTED] ALSO INDICATED GENERALS ARE QUITE COSY AS REGARDS ANY DETAILS OF THEIR PLANS. SUCH POSITION ON THEIR PART I BELIEVE IS UNDERSTANDABLE AT THIS TIME. UP TO NOW I HAVE NOT DISCUSSED ANY PLAN OF ACTION WITH GENERALS. IN FACT I HAVE NO AUTHORITY TO DO SO. HOWEVER I AM READY TO DO SO IF DIRECTED, AND IF IT IS DETERMINED [REDACTED] ^{25X1A} HAS GONE AS FAR AS IT CAN GO - AND GENERALS NOW NEED MORE CONCRETE ASSURANCE OF U.S. BACKING. AS I SEE MOST OF THE GENERALS QUITE FREQUENTLY, APPROACH CAN BE DONE IN COURSE OF NORMAL MEETINGS. I AGREE WE DO NOT WANT TO BACK ANY PLAN THAT DOES NOT AUGUR FOR SUCCESS.

IN SUMMATION IT IS MY OPINION THAT NOT ONLY ARE WE UNALTERABLY COMMITED TO SUPPORT ACTIONS OF GENERALS TO RELIEVE VIETNAM FROM THE NHU INFLUENCES BUT THAT ALSO SUCH COURSE OF ACTION IS IN THE BEST



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INTERESTS OF OUR COUNTRY.

SKILLFULL EXECUTION ON PART OF ALL CONCERNED COULD LEAD TO SUCCESSFUL ACCOMPLISHMENT OF TASK WITH LITTLE OR NO BLOODSHED. WE MUST ACCEPT FACT THAT LESS SKILLFUL EXECUTION WHILE STILL ACCOMPLISHING OVER-ALL AIM COULD WELL RESULT IN MORE INTENSE ACTIONS WITH RESULTANT SEVERE CONSEQUENCES. HOWEVER ON BALANCE FEEL THAT COMPETENCE OF THOSE INVOLVED AND THEIR DETERMINATION TO RID THEIR COUNTRY OF FESTERING SORE WILL INSURE SUCCESS.

IN ALL CORPS THE WAR AGAINST THE VC IS PROGRESSING, ALTHOUGH AT SOMEWHAT DIMINISHED RATE.

APPARENT ATMOSPHERE OF CALM PREVAILS THROUGHOUT SAIGON WHICH BELIES THE INTENSE UNDERCURRENTS WHICH ABOUND WITHIN THE CITY WHICH IS RIFE WITH RUMORS, TENSIONS AND UNDERCURRENTS. SITUATION IS POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE.

SUGGESTED COURSE OF U.S. ACTION IS TO CONTINUE OUR PRESENT ASSURANCES OF SUPPORT TO THE GENERALS WHILE AT SAME TIME ATTEMPTING PERSUADE DIEM TO TAKE NECESSARY ACTION TO REMOVE NHUS FROM COUNTRY.

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