

(6)

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

ps

Wednesday, Feb. 14, 1968
6:05 p. m.

rec'd 6:20p

MR. PRESIDENT:

Herewith a grim -- but possibly realistic --
assessment from London's man in Hanoi
(filed from Singapore).

He says Hanoi is not interested in negotiations;
and it is prepared for a protracted war.

W. Rostow

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ attachment

ADDRESSED TO WASHINGTON TEL NO 1569 OF 14 FEBRUARY REPEATED FOR
INFORM TO UNITS NEW YORK (FOR LORD CARADON) AND SAVING TO PARIS
(FOR AMBASSADOR).

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NY TEL NO 1574 (NOT TO ALL)

(From the British Embassy)

FOLLOWING FROM PRIVATE SECRETARY.

VIETNAM.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY WOULD LIKE YOU TO PASS ON THE REPORT IN PARIS
TELEGRAM NO 158 ^(below) AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO MR. RUSK.

2. IN DOING SO YOU SHOULD EXPLAIN THAT MR BROWN HAS ASKED YOU TO
PASS THIS ON IN CASE MR RUSK HAS NOT HAD THE REPORT THROUGH
HIS OWN SOURCES. PLEASE ADD THAT IT SEEMS TO MR BROWN THAT THE ONLY
ANSWER GIVEN TO U THANT WAS THAT IN PARA 5. AND THIS HE FEARS MAY
REPRESENT HANOI'S REAL POSITION.

~~SECRET~~
ADDRESSED TO FO TEL NO. 150 OF 14 FEBRUARY REF. FOR INFO TO
UKHIS NEW YORK (FOR LORD CARADON) AND WASHINGTON (FOR AMBASSADOR).

FOLLOWING FOR PRIVATE SECRETARY,
YOUR TELEGRAM NO. 524.
VIETNAM.

U THANT RECEIVED ME AT 15.00 (PARIS TIME). HE SAID THAT HE
HAD HAD A LONG TALK WITH MAI VAN BO THIS MORNING AND THAT HE
WOULD BE SEEING THE GENERAL AT 16.00 AND COUVE LATER THIS
EVENING.

2. U THANT SAID THAT THE FIRST QUESTION WHICH HE HAD PUT
TO THE NORTH VIETNAM CONSUL GENERAL AT NEW DELHI WAS: HOW
SOON AFTER THE BOMBING STOPS CAN TALKS BE EXPECTED TO BEGIN?
WOULD IT BE IN LESS THAN THREE TO FOUR WEEKS? MAI VAN BO'S ANSWER
WAS THAT THE WORDS QUOTE AS SOON AS UNQUOTE MEANT QUOTE AN
APPROPRIATE TIME UNQUOTE (UN TEMPS CONVENABLE). HE EXPLAINED THAT
THIS MEANT A PERIOD WITHIN WHICH NORTH VIETNAM WOULD HAVE PROOF
THAT THE CESSATION OF BOMBING WAS QUOTE EFFECTIVE UNQUOTE AND THE
UNITED STATES WOULD HAVE DEMONSTRATED THE QUOTE REALITY UNQUOTE
OF THIS CESSATION. U THANT SAID THAT IT SEEMED CLEAR THAT MAI
VAN BO HAD NO PRECISE IDEA OF THE TIME INVOLVED IN TERMS OF DAYS
OR WEEKS: BUT HIS OWN GUESS WAS THAT IT WAS LESS THAN TWO WEEKS.

...../3.....U THANT

3. U THANT SAID THAT ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS WHICH HE HAD PUT AT NEW DELHI WAS WHETHER IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT AFTER THE MEETING BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF HANOI AND THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, THE GENEVA CONFERENCE COULD BE CONVENED. MAI VAN BO'S ANSWER WAS THAT THIS WOULD BE A MATTER TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING OF NORTH VIETNAMESE AND AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVES. ALL QUESTIONS COULD BE RAISED AT IT. BOTH SIDES WOULD BE FREE TO PROPOSE ANY ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION.
4. U THANT SAID THAT A THIRD QUESTION WHICH HE HAD PUT AT NEW DELHI WAS WHETHER THE LEVEL OF HOSTILITIES (PRESUMABLY HE MEANT IN THE SOUTH) WOULD BE REDUCED ONCE A MEETING TAKES PLACE. MAI VAN BO HAD NOT ANSWERED THIS QUESTION DIRECTLY. HE SAID THAT WHEN AND IF DISCUSSIONS START, THE WHOLE VIETNAM PROBLEM CAN BE DISCUSSED AND ANY POINTS RAISED BY EITHER SIDE CAN BE TAKEN UP. U THANT COMMENTED THAT THERE WAS THUS NO PRIOR COMMITMENT. HANOI'S POSITION WAS IN FACT THAT THIS QUESTION WAS A MATTER FOR THE NATIONAL LIBERAL FRONT AND NOT FOR HANOI.
5. U THANT HAD ASKED MAI VAN BO WHETHER PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S SAN ANTONIO FORMULA WAS ACCEPTABLE TO HIS GOVERNMENT. THE ANSWER WAS THAT IT WAS NOT, SINCE THE OFFER TO STOP BOMBING WAS CONDITIONAL.

6. SUMMING UP HIS CONVERSATION WITH MAI VAN BO, U THANT SAID THAT THE FORMER HAD BEEN VERY EMPHATIC THAT A MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE AS SOON AS THE EFFECTIVE CESSATION OF BOMBING AND OF OTHER ACTS OF WAR AGAINST NORTH VIETNAM (E.G. NAVAL BOMBARDMENTS) HAS BEEN PROVED TO BE A REALITY. U THANT ADDED THAT HE REMAINED CONVINCED THAT TO ACCEPT A MEETING ON THESE TERMS WAS THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE PROGRESS TOWARDS A SOLUTION.

~~6.6.67-7-1 SAID~~

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7. I SAID THAT I KNEW THE SECRETARY OF STATE WOULD BE GRATEFUL TO HIM FOR GIVING ME THIS ACCOUNT OF HIS TALK WITH MAI VAN BO. WE AGREED THAT HE WOULD NOT, REPEAT NOT, ANNOUNCE THAT HE HAD SEEN ME.