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Pres file

Wednesday, July 26, 1967 -- 8:45 a.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith the report on Clifford-Taylor talks with Thieu-Ky.

It includes:

-- Reaffirmation of prompt 65,000 Vietnamese military manpower increase.

-- Thang's request that we stop publicly criticizing pacification (problem is really inadequate ARVN security performance, not Thang's effort with special cadres, etc.).

-- Ky's suggestion of pre-summit foreign ministers' meeting in Saigon and that Australia be considered for summit site.

-- Ky's recommendation that summit be held in late October or November.

-- Bui Diem's suggestion that Vietnamese assume some responsibility for asking for additional troops -- and not leave job wholly up to U.S.

In addition, there is reference to a critical point for the future. Do, the Foreign Minister, notes that without a strong Vietnamese party structure, the NLF cannot be invited to shift from organized war to organized politics: they would be a "Trojan horse." When peace comes, the Communists certainly will take an organized role in politics, legally or otherwise, and, at the right time, the offer to do so may be helpful to a settlement.

Therefore, the build up of a large national non-Communist party in South Vietnam remains essential for political stability.

W. W. Rostow

Saigon 1871, July 25, 1967

WWRostow:rln

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SAIGON 1871

July 25, 1967

Following is summary report of 2-1/2 hour meeting with government of Vietnam. Present on U.S. side were Bunker, Clifford, Taylor, Locke, Westmoreland, Steadman, Calhoun and Matthews. Present for the government of Vietnam were Thieu, Ky, Cao Van Vien, Do, Thang, and Bui Diem. Ambassador opened meeting by suggesting that it would be useful to discuss ways of reinforcing progress already made in Vietnam with a view to consulting our allies on ways in which more pressures can be brought on the enemy in order to move towards a solution of the Vietnamese problem. Elections and the constitutional process, army of the Republic of Vietnam improvement and re-orientation, pacification, and the most effective use of manpower resources were suggested points for consideration.

1. Elections - On elections, Thieu said they must be entirely honest and fair in order to show Vietnamese people the government of Vietnam really wants a democratically elected government which can defeat the enemy and promote a better life for its citizens. By developing the political process in South Vietnam, the communists can be won over ideologically and their future threat forestalled. Clifford said he was gratified to hear these comments as nothing could be more damaging to our common cause abroad than the impression that the elections were not honest. The basic purpose should be to gain self-determination for the people of Vietnam in order to develop popular support here and increase international backing for the cause of Vietnam. He emphasized particular importance of this goal in terms of maintaining support for President Johnson's Vietnam policy at home.

2. Army of the Republic of Vietnam Improvement - Vien described plans by the government of Vietnam for increase by 65,000 of South Vietnamese armed forces, including 50,000 for Regular Force/Popular Force. Said this would require some mobilization and reduction of draft age to 18 through new law to be effective January 1, 1968. Vien added that program can move ahead now and forces could be in existence by end of 1967 by holding men in service. He said four-year term of service would remain and those released would stay in reserve status. He thought Revolutionary Development and police force needs could also be met satisfactorily. Thieu commented that he thought

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government of Vietnam manpower needs could be fulfilled until the end of 1968. Vien described the Army of the Republic of Vietnam reorganization plans starting with leadership program inaugurated 18 months ago, to include career management, and improved schooling, training and advancement possibilities. Westmoreland remarked that the stabilization period of 1967 was being used to improve quality of the South Vietnamese armed forces. He noted specifically that 2200 men had been commissioned from ranks which was a significant military and social development. He expressed gratification at results to date of reorientation and restraining of forces for pacification role which will continue and will eventually include all army of the Republic of Vietnam personnel. Thieu stressed need for increasing Regular Force/Popular Force in order to consolidate and expand Revolutionary Development efforts in villages and hamlets and requirement for increased weapons and equipment for combat units at village-hamlet level in order to afford continuing security there. Ky noted that a general overhaul of the South Vietnamese Armed Forces was being studied in order to improve pay scales and increase efficiency. Taylor concluded this discussion by noting the value to U. S. of increased participation by armed forces of allies and asked for government of Vietnam support in obtaining them, especially from Korea and Thailand.

3. Pacification - Thang expressed his concern at continuing criticism of lack of progress in pacification and urged that it be considered in context total government effort. He said maintenance of security and elimination of corruption are vital requirements for progress in Revolutionary Development. Noting the considerable casualties already inflicted on Revolutionary Development cadre and fact morale remained high, he said he was encouraged with progress made and thought everything possible was being done to give it full support of South Vietnamese Armed Forces and the government of Vietnam.

Ambassador agreed progress was being made and paid tribute to Thang's efforts and overall responsibility for this important nation-building process. He stressed that purpose of U. S. reorganization was to improve our ability to help the government of Vietnam and observed that constitutional process and pacification, both of which have our support, must go hand in hand. Taylor endorsed these remarks and agreed that all government resources must be pulled together and that security is the first requirement. He expressed hope the government of

Vietnam could simplify government procedures and particularly give province chiefs broader authority to push Revolutionary Development effort. Ky agreed that they need more authority and said this was being studied by the government of Vietnam. He remarked that the Revolutionary Development program is a long-term effort and needed both supervision and criticism, but not continuous criticism such as press has given it, which adversely affects morale of Revolutionary Development cadre.

Thang noted Viet Cong attacks and statements against Revolutionary Development as evidence of program's effectiveness. He said cadre were being trained to become part of village life and were instilling new atmosphere there, thus bringing pressure on Viet Cong. He recommended that the program be doubled from the present 29,000 to 60,000 which would provide 1,000 teams. He summarized points he regarded as essential to success.

(1) The newly elected government must be honest and capable, with authority for Revolutionary Development placed at Prime Minister's level, or at least higher than Cabinet Minister.

(2) Armed Forces must be instilled with new spirit and Regular Force/Popular Force reorganized to identify their interests with those of people rather than government; this must be instilled at all levels of military command.

(3) Government administration must be reorganized, with province and district chiefs as first priority, to carry out government programs from the top with view to acceptance at all levels of importance of Revolutionary Development effort.

(4) Spirit of Vietnamese people must be changed to give them sense of responsibility for themselves and to lessen feeling of reliance on allies; he suggested elimination of corruption, and instilling of spirit of austerity and revolutionary style. Thieu endorsed Thang's comments.

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4. Pressures on the enemy. Thieu said that pressures must be increased on all fronts -- (1) ground war and revolutionary development effort, (2) air war against North Viet Nam, (3) political development, (4) economic battle to hold down inflation, and (5) diplomatic initiatives to bring pressure on Hanoi to negotiate. Clifford reiterated President's hope that trip will lead to greater allied participation and asked for government of Viet Nam views as to what was needed, suggesting they might wish to make requests to allied governments themselves. Ky said government of Viet Nam must first show its own good will by increasing its own forces. Then, he hoped that more troops might be added from Republic of Korea and another Philcag from Philippines. He seemed doubtful that much could be obtained from Australia and New Zealand or from Thailand this year. Clifford said he hoped more forces could be obtained from both Thais and Republic of Korea. Westmoreland emphasized need for infantry battalions and patrol units and expressed hope Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand and Thais might supply such units with appropriate supporting elements. He agreed another Philcag was needed. It was decided that he and General Vien would draw up their joint view of what is needed and they should not be modest in their approach. Clifford said he was sure allied leaders would recognize importance of such contributions to their own nations and he would talk frankly to them in private about our needs. Thieu endorsed this approach and suggested that it should be followed up at a summit conference of 7 nations.

5. Summit conference. Ky suggested that there should be a preliminary Foreign Ministers' meeting before summit convenes and urged that it be held in Saigon. He noted an allied tendency to avoid Saigon for such meetings and thought it would be useful to them to see Viet Nam. It would also be helpful boost to Vietnamese morale. Ambassador raised question of timing and Thieu said he recognized there were timing problems for Republic of Korea, Philippines, and Government of Viet Nam. From Government of Viet Nam viewpoint meetings should follow installation of newly elected government. He thought new president would be in office in early October and government formed later that month. He suggested meetings be held in late October or November. Clifford raised question of what the main purpose or focus of summit should be, and Thieu responded that it should give some new sign of free world determination which would be useful in bringing pressure on the enemy. Clifford agreed that preliminary Foreign Ministers' meeting, particularly to discuss prospects for negotiations, would be useful and he saw advantages to Saigon as a site. Regarding summit location, Ky urged that Australia be considered since the last conference was in an Asian country and he hoped to involve Australia more and more in Asian-Pacific problems. Clifford noted the strong desire of Republic of Korea and Thais to be hosts and suggested there be continuing consultation on this question, perhaps with final decision to be made at Foreign Ministers' meeting.

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Clifford asked for Government of Viet Nam views regarding negotiations. Do said their views, as already stated, were for a return to the terms of the Geneva Agreement with division into two Vietnams at the 17th parallel and a regrouping of forces based on this line. He said effective supervisory control was essential, however, and International Control Commission (ICC) or some other international group capable of enforcing it should be used. Regarding the National Liberation Force, Do said Government of Viet Nam was prepared to accept National Liberation Force as part of Hanoi delegation but not as a separate delegation. Within South Viet Nam, they were prepared to accept National Liberation Force members as individuals but not as a political party or entity. Individuals would be offered full rights as citizens under constitution, including right to vote and run for office. He stressed absence of political party structure in South Viet Nam as main reason for not allowing National Liberation Force to enter political life here lest it become a "Trojan horse."

Clifford raised the question of desirability of continuing bombing of North Viet Nam or possible pause to encourage negotiations. Theiu said past bombing pauses had brought no results and urged there be no further bombing halts before U. S. elections. He said that if some sign of goodwill was needed, it should be without risk to our troops in South Viet Nam, and if there was no response then military pressure must be increased after the pause, he noted the psychological and political effects of any bombing pause. Clifford said he was fully aware of the extensive enemy resupply efforts during the Tet truce and agreed that the U. S. and Government of Viet Nam should examine this question very carefully. He said our Korean experience had taught us the danger of talking and fighting simultaneously since this inevitably reduces pressure on the enemy and benefits them primarily.

6. Government of Viet Nam role with allies. In subsequent private conversation Bui Diem indicated Government of Viet Nam concern at having U. S. representatives speak for both Government of Viet Nam and U. S. in requesting greater assistance from troop-contributing countries. He said Government of Viet Nam had been considering matter and had agreed in principle that Government of Viet Nam representatives should also visit these countries for same purpose. He indicated that if this were done, he might be designated to undertake that mission before returning to Washington.

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