

Mr. Brumley Smith 68
1-Suspense
2-Presidential File

Saturday, August 26, 1967 (4:00 pm)

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Mr. President:

Attached is Ambassador Bunker's cable outlining plans for the election observers. It looks quite good to me. The schedule for September 2-4 (referred to at the bottom of page 3) is just arriving. I will get it to you as soon as possible.

William J. Jorden

Att.

SECRET/EXDIS Attachment

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68a.

FM: AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO: SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE

SECRET SAIGON 4107

Aug 26, 1967

EXDIS

REF: STATE 27362

SUBJECT: U.S. ELECTION OBSERVERS

1. Embassy has now completed tentative outline of program for observers. This has been formulated with careful regard for various instructions and guidance received from Department. Following is outline of proposed program:

August 30:

5 P.M. - Observers arrive. Received at VIP entrance Tan Son Nhut Airport. Reception Committee, Ministry Foreign Affairs in charge reception arrangements. Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Tran Van Do expected greet observers on behalf GVN. Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland will be present. Press will be present but there will be no formal press conference.

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

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By 100, NARA, Date 12-15-94 ~~SECRET-EXDIS~~

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5:30 P. M. - Observers transported to respective quarters.

Present plans are to house observers in private homes). Transportation by Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Ministry escorts.

6:30-8:30 P. M. - (for those desiring) - Informal cocktails at residence of Ambassador Bunker.

August 31:

9:30 A. M. - 12:00 Noon - Observers will gather at MACCORDS Conference Room. Limited number of press will be invited to attend on pool basis. Observers will be greeted by Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland. Following remarks by Ambassador and Westmoreland, there will be a briefing on the elections by the Political Section.

2 - 6 P. M. - Observers will be divided into five or six groups for visits to nearby provinces. Possibly two of these groups will be scheduled for more distant visits to points where they will remain overnight.

6 P. M. - Return Saigon.

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9 - 10 P.M. - For those desiring, arrangements will be made for viewing television appearances by candidates. Translators will be present.

September 1:

9 - 11 A.M. - All observers (except those who remained in field overnight) will attend (or be able to view) election rally in front of Saigon City Hall. (This is final rally for Presidential candidates and only one scheduled for period during which observers will be in Viet-Nam.)

11 A.M. - Observer groups will depart on visits to provinces. (One group, or more should the observers desire, will tour Saigon to view election preparations and activities.)

5 P.M. - All observer groups return Saigon.

6:30-8 P.M. - Informal reception by Ambassador Bunker.

9 - 10 P.M. - Viewing candidates' television appearances.

September 2 to 4:

All observers join GVN schedule (see Septel).

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September 5:

Meeting with General Westmoreland and other senior Mission Officers. Classified Mission briefing and field trips (Military and Revolutionary Development for all observers. No press attendance.)

September 5:

All observers depart for Washington.

2. We believe it essential that observers be exposed to press sufficiently to assure that press can assert they have not been closeted with and "brainwashed" by Embassy. Thus, we favor press attendance at August 31 briefing and also favor permitting representatives of press (on pool basis) to accompany each of groups on visits to provinces, etc. We see no need for mass press conference although possible that observers themselves may wish such conference prior to their departure from Saigon.

3. We consider above proposed schedule offers maximum opportunity for observers to get around as much as possible and yet provides necessary flexibility to meet various needs individual observers. Obviously we will tailor schedules to individual needs to maximum extent possible, but we feel that to assure adequate security preparations and

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other arrangements necessary to give observers opportunities for meaningful visits to provinces, advanced planning is necessary.

Accordingly, we plan to make basic arrangements in advance for group tours, offering within these proposed tours as wide a variety of opportunities geographically and politically as possible. The "guided tour" aspect of this is unfortunate, but in view of importance of personalities involved, we feel security risk in any more informal arrangement for visits to provinces too great, particularly in view enhanced dangers during election period.

4. We recognize that membership of observer group covers wide spectrum of professional, experience and personal interests and we are bearing this in mind. We do not intend to do any advanced individual scheduling but we shall make every effort to meet observers' varied desires promptly and with maximum flexibility, bearing in mind again that security considerations may limit opportunities for movement outside of Saigon.

5. The GVN schedule as presently planned for September 2 through 4 is not ideal, particularly with respect to election day. We are urging GVN to include more places of observation on election day than the three now scheduled, and we hope final version will be an

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improvement. In any event, however, we feel most strongly that at least a majority of the observers should join in full with the GVN schedule for those three days. Not only does GVN (which is sensitive about appearances with respect to its sovereignty) set great store by the participation of the American observers as an integral part of the invited observer groups from other nations, but arrogating special status to U.S. observers would seriously detract from the impression, just as essential to us, that these elections are completely a Vietnamese show.

6. While we would hope that a goodly percentage of the group would follow the GVN schedule, we recognize that some may feel strongly about not doing so and we are prepared to make alternative arrangements for them. In order that this whole problem does not get out of hand, however, we would greatly appreciate it if the group could be informed in advance at as high a level as possible of the importance of remembering that in the eyes of the GVN they are here as guests of the GVN and that both U.S. and GVN interests will be served by their cooperating, to the extent feasible, with GVN arrangements.

7. We are planning to send an officer to join the observers' plane at Yokota AFB, Japan and to be available on balance of flight to brief them on arrangements and provide certain advance material which may be helpful. We greatly appreciate Department's inclusion of Marsh and

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Teare as escort officers. If a third language officer is available, we could use him.

3. We will, of course, keep Department fully informed of all plans and developments with respect to observers and on how their visit proceeds after their arrival.

BUNKER

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