

35
Profile

Monday, August 14, 1967

8 PM

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Letters to Viet-Nam Troop Contributors

Attached are the drafts of letters to the heads of government of our allies in Viet-Nam (Australia, Korea, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand, Viet-Nam). They are written to follow up the Clifford-Taylor Mission.

Secretary Rusk has approved. Clifford and Taylor were both consulted, and the letters contain their suggestions.

The letters raise the question of a summit meeting and express your preference for late November. This takes into consideration:

-- Viet-Nam's House election on October 22; planned installation of new government on November 1;

-- Philippine senatorial election on November 14;

-- Visit of Laos Crown Prince here on November 9 and Prime Minister Sato on November 13-14;

-- Soviet's 50th anniversary on November 6-7 (a coincidence between this and a summit has disadvantages);

-- Australian partial Senate elections in early December.

You should know that Thieu and Ky have suggested a meeting of foreign ministers in Saigon in early October. This could lay the groundwork for a summit.

W. W. Rostow

Atts.

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NIJ 94-295

By sig, NARA, Date 6-22-95

Letters approved _____

Disapproved _____

See me _____

~~SECRET~~

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35-2

August 14, 1967

Dear Harold:

I express my appreciation for the courtesies extended to my emissaries, Mr. Clifford and General Taylor. They have been most complimentary in their comments on the reception given them by you and your colleagues. I am highly gratified at the frank and forthright discussions that took place, and am confident that they have contributed to an even closer relationship and understanding between our two countries.

I now have your long and thoughtful letter, delivered to me on August 3, giving your reflections on the visit and the issues discussed.

I fully appreciate the points you have made, and the various factors that you and your Cabinet will have to take into account in arriving at a decision. I particularly welcome your statement that you will be announcing on August 15 an 18 per cent increase in defense expenditure for this financial year. This continues the constructive trend toward greater responsibility of the last four years.

Australia's performance in foreign aid and in the allocation of resources to development continues to call for our admiration. Your recent decision to give 150,000 tons of wheat to India is a particularly helpful and timely act of responsible generosity.

With the full realization of the complexities of your problem, I do return to the hope that you and your Cabinet can make an early decision to send a two-battalion combat team. My emissaries have reported on the discussions which you had as to specific increases in your forces. My hope is that you will make the maximum effort in this regard, and that you will be able to make an announcement as speedily as possible.

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NE 94-295

By John, NARA, Date 6-22-95

Holt

Australia

May I particularly point out some of the timing factors at this end? As you know, I have now put before the Congress proposals for a major tax increase and at the same time have announced our decision to raise our own forces in Viet-Nam by 45,000 men. In the next 3-4 weeks, the tax proposal will be in its most critical phase in the Congress, and I will certainly be pressed hard as to the plans that other nations may have to add to their forces in Viet-Nam, alongside the 65,000-man increase announced by the South Vietnamese themselves and our own decision. I simply cannot exaggerate the favorable effect it would have here if we were able to tell the Congress within the next month that your Government had reached a firm decision along the lines I have suggested above.

As to the impact of the British decision concerning Singapore and Malaysia, you and I have shared our thoughts fully on this subject, and I realize that you will be at the center of discussions on new arrangements that may be required over the next few years to pick up the slack that British reductions, and eventual withdrawal at a later time, may leave. I realize that you face general questions of allocation and concentration arising from this situation, but I would hope that these problems need not affect a decision of the scale I have suggested above. I need hardly point out that the Malaysia/Singapore defense problem, as it may exist by 1970 or thereafter, will be vitally affected by whether we have succeeded in achieving a favorable outcome in Viet-Nam.

Your letter shows once again that you are thinking the problem through to the fullest, and I am sure you will reach a constructive and responsible decision as you have always done in the past. I do only urge that you tackle the problem as rapidly as possible in our common interest and in order to keep the pressure on in Viet-Nam at this critical time.

As to the other matters you mention, I understand that Mr. McMahon's representatives have had fruitful meetings with our Treasury people, and we will do all we can to reach an early answer on this difficult problem. My special thanks to

you for your word of sympathy on our difficult racial violence problem, as well as your kind words on the Forrestal losses. This has been a time of sadness and concern in many respects, but I need hardly assure you that our resolve to go forward in Viet-Nam and in Southeast Asia will not be affected.

Finally, Messrs. Clifford and Taylor of course discussed with you the question of a summit meeting some time this fall, a matter which you and I have gone over frequently. The consensus they found in all capitals was in the direction of a meeting, arranged at Asian initiative and in an Asian setting, at some time after the South Vietnamese elections have been held and the new government has been created.

I want to ask you frankly what your own timing factors are with respect to possible dates from late October onward. Within the past week, the Assembly elections in South Viet-Nam have been moved from October 11 to October 22, and the new government will probably have inauguration ceremonies on November 1. This seems to make it most doubtful that we could have a useful summit before November at the earliest. Marcos has elections on November 14, and at the same time we have a long-planned and important visit by Prime Minister Sato of Japan.

I therefore lean to the latter half of November. From your standpoint, I particularly wonder whether you will be affected by your senatorial elections, which I understand come in early December. Are there dates that would be more or less convenient, or even impossible, for you from the standpoint of these domestic factors?

With my warm regards, and again my thanks for your full and frank letter.

Sincerely,

Lyndon B. Johnson

The Right Honorable
Harold Edward Holt
Prime Minister of Australia
Canberra

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NTJ 94-295

By sig, NARA Date 6-22-95 August 14, 1967

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I express my appreciation for the courtesies extended to my emissaries, Mr. Clifford and General Taylor. They have been most complimentary in their comments on the reception given them by you and your colleagues. I am highly gratified at the frank and forthright discussions that took place, and am confident that they have contributed to an even closer relationship and understanding between our two countries.

I know that you and your colleagues have been giving careful and responsible thought to the question of increasing your forces in South Viet-Nam. In their visits, Messrs. Clifford and Taylor found agreement in the belief that this is a critical time and that it is essential to maintain the momentum of our military efforts, even as we search always for some sign in Hanoi of a willingness to move toward peace. I believe strongly that it would have a great effect in Hanoi if it became clear that all of us, within our capabilities, were prepared to increase our efforts at this time, and you have of course noted the increase of 65,000 in South Vietnamese forces and our own announcement of an increase of 45,000 men.

Of even greater importance, is the effect that an increase of forces on the part of our allies will have on our ability to maintain and expand the contribution that this country is making. As Messrs. Clifford and Taylor informed you in advance, I have now requested an increase in taxes in the form of a ten per cent surtax which is made necessary by our expanding costs in Viet-Nam.

Let me say to you, quite frankly, that the action of the Congress and the attitude of our people on this question will be influenced to a great extent by the decision that you and our other allies make in increasing your forces.

My emissaries have reported on the discussions which you had as to specific increases in your forces. My hope is that you will make the maximum effort in this regard, and that you will be able to make an announcement as speedily as possible.

Kittikachorn
Bangkok, Thailand

In essence, I fully share the view that you and several members of your Government expressed to Messrs. Clifford and Taylor as to the absolute necessity of continuing and intensifying all forms of military action both in South Viet-Nam and against North Viet-Nam itself. We are continuing to explore all the actions within our power, and will not hesitate to take those that promise a clear net military advantage.

Messrs. Clifford and Taylor have also given me the views of Your Excellency and your colleagues as to the possibility of a summit conference, and the various matters that should be discussed there. In all their visits, they encountered favorable reactions to such a conference at some time after the conclusion of the South Vietnamese elections and the installation of a new government, and there appears also to be general agreement -- which we certainly share -- that a new summit conference should be convened as an Asian initiative and at an appropriate Asian location. My own tentative thoughts on dates run in the direction of late November, and I would be grateful for any thoughts you may have on timing. In any event, I think we should all be in close touch with each other shortly after the South Vietnamese Presidential elections in early September, which could be an immensely important event not only in the progress of the war but in creating the conditions for greater stability and progress in South Viet-Nam.

I am most grateful for all the courtesies that your Government extended to Messrs. Clifford and Taylor, and the opportunity for such a full and frank discussion seems to me invaluable.

With my high respects,

Sincerely,

LS/ Lyndon B. Johnson

His Excellency
Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn
Prime Minister
Government House
Bangkok

33

August 14, 1967

Dear General Thieu:

Clark Clifford and General Taylor have informed me of their useful discussions with you and your colleagues during their recent visit to Viet-Nam. They have also informed me of the conversations they have had with our other allies in Thailand, Australia, New Zealand and Korea. As you know they were unable to visit the Philippines at this time. I am writing you now to share with you the information they have brought back and to let you have my suggestions on future courses of events.

Mr. Clifford and General Taylor reported that the leaders of each of the countries they visited remain united in their determination to proceed with the war in South Viet-Nam in as vigorous a way as possible. The leaders believe that the pressure against Hanoi and the Viet Cong must be maintained and increased, and they all agreed in principle that additional contributions from all countries will be needed to bring a successful end to the war. No specific commitments were made, but the allied nations all agreed to examine urgently and most sympathetically the additional steps that they would be able to take to assist your government and people to defeat the communist aggressors. The decision of the South Vietnamese Government to increase its armed forces by 65,000 men was particularly heartening to them.

I have not presented to the Congress my proposal for imposing a surtax of 10% on the American people to help finance the war in Viet-Nam. We have also announced an additional 45,000 troops for commitment to the fight in South Viet-Nam. The response of our Asian allies in this struggle will be of great importance to me in persuading the Congress and the American people that these additional sacrifices are part of the common effort to defeat aggression.

Messrs. Clifford and Taylor also discussed with the leaders of our allies the desirability of another summit conference. All

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NUJ 94-295

By John, NARA, Date 6-22-95

Thieu
So. Viet Nam

agreed that another conference before the end of this year is desirable, but felt that a specific decision on the timing and site should await the conclusion of the important elections to be held in South Viet-Nam.

In this regard my emissaries found in each country great interest in the forthcoming elections in your country. The leaders of our allies were unanimous in their belief that a broadly representative government chosen with wide participation by the South Vietnamese people in free and fair elections will have incalculable value in increasing support for South Viet-Nam among the people in the allied countries as well as throughout the world. I want you to know that such elections will be of tremendous importance to me also in maintaining and increasing support among the American people and in the Congress for increased assistance to your country in its valiant struggle.

I wish to express my appreciation for the courtesies extended to my emissaries, Mr. Clifford and General Taylor. They have been most complimentary in their comments on the reception given them by you and your colleagues. I am highly gratified at the frank and forthright discussions that took place, and am confident that they have contributed to an even closer relationship and understanding between our two countries.

I hope the views in this letter are useful to you and your colleagues and I would be glad to receive your views about any of the matters discussed.

With best regards to yourself and your colleagues and in continuing admiration of the bravery of your people, I am

Sincerely,

/S/ Lyndon B. Johnson

Lieutenant General Nguyen Van Thieu
Chairman of the National Leadership
Committee of the Congress of the
Armed Forces
Republic of Viet-Nam
Saigon

35-1

August 14, 1967

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I express my appreciation for the courtesies extended to my emissaries, Mr. Clifford and General Taylor. They have been most complimentary in their comments on the reception given them by you and your colleagues. I am highly gratified at the frank and forthright discussions that took place, and am confident that they have contributed to an even closer relationship and understanding between our two countries.

I know that you and your colleagues have been giving careful and responsible thought to the question of increasing your forces in South Viet-Nam. In their visits, Messrs. Clifford and Taylor found agreement in the belief that this is a critical time and that it is essential to maintain the momentum of our military efforts, even as we search always for some sign in Hanoi of a willingness to move toward peace. I believe strongly that it would have a great effect in Hanoi if it became clear that all of us, within our capabilities, were prepared to increase our efforts at this time, and you have of course noted the increase of 65,000 in South Vietnamese forces and our own announcement of an increase of 45,000 men.

Of even greater importance, is the effect that an increase of forces on the part of our allies will have on our ability to maintain and expand the contribution that this country is making. As Messrs. Clifford and Taylor informed you in advance, I have now requested an increase in taxes in the form of a ten per cent surtax which is made necessary by our expanding costs in Viet-Nam.

Let me say to you, quite frankly, that the action of the Congress and the attitude of our people on this question will be influenced to a great extent by the decision that you and our other allies make in increasing your forces.

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NEJ 94-295

By kg NARA Date 6-22-95

Holyoake
New Zealand

My emissaries have reported on the discussions which you had as to specific increases in your forces. My hope is that you will make the maximum effort in this regard, and that you will be able to make an announcement as speedily as possible.

As to the question of a possible summit meeting, Messrs. Clifford and Taylor found affirmative reactions in all capitals toward the possibility of such a meeting after the South Vietnamese elections and the installation of a new government there. There also seems to be a common view that such a meeting should be at Asian initiative and in an appropriate Asian setting. My own mind runs in the direction of late November, and I should be most interested to have your thoughts, however tentative, on timing factors from your standpoint.

I would be most grateful for your views as you reflect on your discussions with Messrs. Clifford and Taylor and on this wholly private letter.

With my warm regards and best personal wishes.

Sincerely,

IS/ Lyndon B. Johnson

The Rt. Hon. Keith Holyoake, C.H., M.P.
Prime Minister of New Zealand
Wellington

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

August 14, 1967

NEJ 94-225

By 12, NARA, Date 6-22-95

Dear Mr. President:

I express my appreciation for the courtesies extended to my emissaries, Mr. Clifford and General Taylor. They have been most complimentary in their comments on the reception given them by you and your colleagues. I am highly gratified at the frank and forthright discussions that took place, and am confident that they have contributed to an even closer relationship and understanding between our two countries.

I know that you and your colleagues have been giving careful and responsible thought to the question of increasing your forces in South Viet-Nam. In their visits, Messrs. Clifford and Taylor found agreement in the belief that this is a critical time and that it is essential to maintain the momentum of our military efforts, even as we search always for some sign in Hanoi of a willingness to move toward peace. I believe strongly that it would have a great effect in Hanoi if it became clear that all of us, within our capabilities, were prepared to increase our efforts at this time, and you have of course noted the increase of 65,000 in South Vietnamese forces and our own announcement of an increase of 45,000 men.

Of even greater importance, is the effect that an increase of forces on the part of our allies will have on our ability to maintain and expand the contribution that this country is making. As Messrs. Clifford and Taylor informed you in advance, I have now requested an increase in taxes in the form of a ten per cent surtax which is made necessary by our expanding costs in Viet-Nam.

Let me say to you, quite frankly, that the action of the Congress and the attitude of our people on this question will be influenced to a great extent by the decision that you and our other allies make in increasing your forces.

My emissaries have reported on the discussions which you had as to specific increases in your forces. My hope is that you will make the maximum effort in this regard, and that

Park

Truman

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you will be able to make an announcement as speedily as possible. Ambassador Porter has the full details on these matters, and would be happy to discuss them with you. In essence, they conform to the type of contribution you and I discussed during my visit to Seoul last fall, and these particular proposals reflect the benefit of experience and analysis conducted since that time in a situation that has changed in many respects. If your Government were able to move in these areas, it would be of substantial immediate help, although we continue to hope that you will be in a position to examine the question of additional combat forces somewhat later in the fall.

As to the question of a possible summit meeting, Messrs. Clifford and Taylor found affirmative reactions in all capitals toward the possibility of such a meeting after the South Vietnamese elections and the installation of a new government there. There also seems to be a common view that such a meeting should be at Asian initiative and in an appropriate Asian setting. My own mind runs in the direction of late November, and I should be most interested to have your thoughts, however tentative, on timing factors from your standpoint.

In closing, let me repeat my deep thanks for all that was done for Messrs. Clifford and Taylor. We must stay in very close touch on all aspects of the situation, and you now of course have with you Ambassador Porter, who brings a deep first-hand knowledge of our relationship.

With my high respects and warm regards,

Sincerely,

/S/ Lyndon B. Johnson

His Excellency
Chung Hee Park
President of the Republic of Korea
Seoul