

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

7
Saturday, October 14, 1967
5:00 p.m.

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MR. PRESIDENT:

VIA MARVIN WATSON

I had Dr. Walter Judd in this afternoon, as directed by Mary Watson. He did three things:

- he gave me his impressions of Viet Nam, from which he has just returned;
- he made a concrete suggestion for rallying opinion in the U.S.;
- he expressed three anxieties about the state of opinion in the U.S.

1. Dr. Judd's impressions

This was his seventh trip to Viet Nam. He came back absolutely convinced that the war is being won. This derived not merely from his briefings and contacts in the field with American officers and men, but also from talks with missionaries and others out in the countryside who in fact gave him evidence that justified greater optimism than that felt by Westy and his staff. He listed his reasons for optimism in an extremely orderly way under military progress: U.S. and ARVN; progress in the countryside; political progress.

The details were interesting; for example, a case where we listed 171 North Vietnamese killed by body count, whereas the local missionary in close touch with the people found out that the villagers had counted 700 dead Communist troops. Another example, their discovering that the North Vietnamese who are coming in to fight are not as effective as the Viet Cong. It takes them three months to get there. Half of them have malignant malaria by the time they arrive.

2. The great danger

He said that the tragedy is that while we are clearly winning the war in Viet Nam, we may be losing it in the U.S. The men in the field, from privates to generals, understand that the war is of critical importance to the U.S. and that things are moving their way; but we have to think of a new approach back home. His operational suggestion is essentially one that we are already considering; namely, that we get the men in Saigon to brief the American people just as they briefed him and they briefed the President. You should introduce this presentation by saying, "I simply wish the American people to know what

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the President knows and why he has confidence that we are moving forward." Then the best briefing team in Saigon would present the military data; data on the position of the Viet Cong; the progress in the countryside; the progress in politics. He said Bunker and Westy would undoubtedly be good, but we should be aware there are some brilliant young colonels who do the briefing out there most effectively and with conviction. He added that he thought the San Antonio speech was the best speech made by the President on Viet Nam, and Rusk's press conference was "superb." But inevitably some in the country feel that the President and the Secretary of State must be presenting a brief for their vested positions. The people trust the military, and objective military briefings, plus that of civilians like Ambassador Bunker, could be extraordinarily important in giving our citizens confidence that the war is moving our way.

I told Dr. Judd we were thinking along similar lines.

3. Three anxieties

First, that if the war goes on too long, the American people might not be able to sustain its strains under the conditions of limited war. A democracy finds it difficult, leading a normal civilian life, to cope with a war like this. We don't have a George Creel or an OWI. We don't have rallies. He has no prescription, but this is his concern.

Second, that the scale of the war, if it is protracted, could do fatal damage to South Vietnamese society. He did not get the feeling that such was the case on the spot, but he feels that the danger could exist if the war were protracted excessively.

Third, he feels that our caution and intent to keep the war limited may lead the Russians to over-commit themselves in Viet Nam and lead to a confrontation because they misjudge American determination.

I told him that we shared his first two concerns; that a "surgical solution" to this kind of war was extremely difficult to devise technically; and that, on the whole, we remained confident that the Russians understood and would not extend their commitment beyond protecting North Viet Nam.

4. I also told Dr. Judd of Senator Douglas' committee, and urged him to join up to give it vitality. He had, incidentally, one very good suggestion; namely, that we organize the Vietnamese veterans to speak out. He found, at Iowa University, that the 20 veterans who believed in the war were going about their business as students; but one sorehead was making a lot of costly noise. The veterans who believe in the war should be told that their duty is not wholly done. I suggested this might be a task for the Douglas committee.

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5. I am sure the President will find Judd heartening, convincing, full of vivid detail. I believe I have correctly reported all his major thoughts and recommendations. It would mean a great deal if the President could see him; but you can judge whether heartening him to go forward and carry the message to the country and expressing your appreciation to him is worth your time.

Dr. Judd is leaving Monday night for the Middle West, so that an appointment with him would have to be fitted in on Monday, Oct. 16.

W. A. R.

Will see Judd on Monday Now confirmed by Marvin Watson's office for 11:30 a.m. on Monday, Oct. 16

No _____

See me _____