

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

21

Thursday, September 28, 1967  
9:15 a.m.

Mr. President:

*Pres file*

Here is Amb. Bunker's response to the message you instructed me to send yesterday. He seems to despair of getting at material well reported from Saigon. I suspect we shall have to work from both ends.

W. W. Rostow

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

*(Attached)*

Saigon 635 [REDACTED]

1.3 (a)(5)

SANITIZED  
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4  
NLJ 94-400  
By lsp, NARA, Date 4-5-95

WWRostow:rln

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SANITIZED  
B.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4  
NJ 94-402  
By [REDACTED], NARA, Date 3-24-95

TO WHITE HOUSE  
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(a)(5)

~~CONFIDENTIAL EYES ONLY 281100Z [REDACTED]~~

FM AMB BUNKER SAIGON 635

TO THE WHITE HOUSE, EYES ONLY WALT ROSTOW

1. PLEASE TELL THE PRESIDENT THAT I CAN WELL UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM HE IS HAVING WITH THE PRESS AND TV AT HOME, AND WE SHALL MOVE IN ON IT RIGHT AWAY. I AM MEETING WITH WESTY, GENE LOCKE, AND BOB KOMER TODAY AND WE SHALL LAY OUT A CRASH PROGRAM TO GET INFORMATION IN YOUR HANDS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

2. MY PRESENT THINKING IS THAT WE SHOULD GIVE YOU FIRST, AND AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, A GENERAL ROUNDUP OF PROGRESS BEING MADE ON ALL FRONTS, INCLUDING PACIFICATION, POPULATION CONTROL, VC MANPOWER PROBLEMS AND MORALE, ECONOMIC PROGRESS IN RURAL AREAS, ARVN REORGANIZATION AND IMPROVED PERFORMANCE, THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS, ETC.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, AS YOU SAY, THE U.S. PRESS HERE CONCENTRATES ON THE DMZ (IS ANOTHER DIEN BIEN PHU IN THE MAKING?); THE THIEU/KY SPLIT (ACTUALLY THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT THEY ARE WORKING TOGETHER BETTER THAN THEY HAVE FOR SOME TIME. CERTAINLY, THIS WAS MY IMPRESSION IN TALKING WITH BOTH OF THEM LAST TUESDAY); ELECTION IRREGULARITIES (THE MOST RESPONSIBLE OPPOSITION CANDIDATES, MUONG, HA THUC KY, AND DAN, HAVE TAKEN NO PART IN THE CHARGES. THEY ARE PROMOTED PRINCIPALLY BY DZU, WHOM EVERYBODY KNOWS IS A CROOK, AND BY SUU, WHO IS SENILE AND BEING USED); NEWSPAPER CLOSINGS (THESE HAVEN'T CAUSED A RIPPLE HERE, NOBODY SEEMS TO REGRET THEM, BELIEVING THE GOVERNMENT HAS HAD GOOD CAUSE TO ACT).

4. I REGRET TO SAY THAT IN A LARGE SEGMENT OF THE PRESS HERE, THERE IS AN OBVIOUS SKEPTICISM, A BIAS AGAINST THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND THEREFORE A TENDENCY TO PLACE THE WORST INTERPRETATION ON ACTS OF THE GVN. I HAVE BEEN GIVING MUCH ATTENTION PERSONALLY TO THE PRESS, BOTH IN BACKGROUND MEETINGS, INDIVIDUALLY AND HAVING THEM IN FOR DINNER INFORMALLY IN SMALL GROUPS IN ORDER TO TRY TO FOCUS ON THE IMPORTANT THINGS THAT ARE TAKING PLACE HERE AND TO RE-ESTABLISH OUR CREDIBILITY. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE IS PRACTICALLY UNIVERSAL DISBELIEF OF OUR FIGURES ON ENEMY CASUALTIES. I HAVE YET TO FIND A SINGLE REPORTER WHO BELIEVES IN THE OBJECTIVITY OF OUR BODY COUNT. WE MUST COUNTER THIS BY BEING IN A POSITION TO RELEASE CAPTURED DOCUMENTS WHICH CORROBORATE THE FIGURES WE GIVE OUT. SOME OF THIS IS CONDITIONED BY WHAT THEY BELIEVE TO HAVE BEEN OFFICIAL OVER-OPTIMISM IN THE PAST. CONSEQUENTLY WE ARE TRYING TO BE OBJECTIVE AND REALISTIC IN DEMONSTRATING THAT WE ARE MAKING STEADY, THOUGH NOT SPECTACULAR, PROGRESS, AND THAT WE ARE DEFINITELY MOVING AHEAD.

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~~CONFIDENTIAL EYES ONLY VIA [REDACTED]~~  
TO AMBASSADOR BUNKER, SAIGON, EYES ONLY, FROM WALT ROSTOW

1.3 (4)(5)

SEPTEMBER 27, 1967

THE PRESIDENT REQUESTS YOU, WESTY, BOB KOMER TO  
SEARCH URGENTLY FOR OCCASIONS TO PRESENT SOUND EVIDENCE  
OF PROGRESS IN VIET NAM.

PRESS AND TV HERE ARE DOMINATED BY IMZ, THIEU-KY SPLIT,  
ALLEGED ELECTION IRREGULARITIES, NEWSPAPER CLOSINGS,  
DEBATES ON BOMBING, ETC. WE MUST SOMEHOW GET HARD EVIDENCE  
OUT OF SAIGON ON STEADY IF SLOW PROGRESS IN POPULATION  
CONTROL, PACIFICATION, VC MANPOWER PROBLEMS, ECONOMIC  
PROGRESS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, ARVN IMPROVEMENT, ETC.  
ALL ARE HAPPENING. LITTLE COMES THROUGH DESPITE WHAT  
WE KNOW TO BE MOST SERIOUS EFFORTS OUT YOUR WAY.

PRESIDENT'S JUDGMENT IS THAT THIS IS AT PRESENT STAGE  
A CRITICALLY IMPORTANT DIMENSION OF FIGHTING THE WAR  
123

SANITIZED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NIJ 94-400

By sf, NARA, Date 4-5-95

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