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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Wednesday, September 27, 1967
1:25 p.m.

Pres file

Mr. President:

As this file indicates, Bob Komer has run somewhat afoul of Congressman Moss.

Bill Leonhart raises some questions in para. 4.

Without a professional feel for the Congress, my instinct is for the White House to keep out of it and let the storm in a teacup die down.

W. W. Rostow

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

WWRostow:rlh

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)
White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983
By 79, NARA, Date 10-9-91

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

September 25, 1967

CONFIDENTIAL
EYES ONLY

MEMORANDUM FOR WALT ROSTOW

1. Walt -- the attached correspondence reflects an unfortunate misunderstanding between Congressman John Moss and Bob Komer. We received it today.
2. By way of background: Bob's cable on Moss Committee criticisms (Saigon 4420) mentioned a "friendly letter" he had sent Moss. We asked for the text and Bob subsequently sent copies to Washington. It now seems there was also a letter from Bob to Ogden Reid (apparently sent on an old-boy basis but which we probably couldn't have done much about had we known).
3. Reid let Bob down and made his letter available to Moss on September 18. Moss may have over-reacted to his letter from Komer but it is the note to Reid which seems to have set him off. He still has a report on the pacification program scheduled for release in about three weeks.
4. Moss has also sent copies of the correspondence to Secretary Rusk and Ambassador Bunker. I would like to leave to your judgment whether the President would want to know about this. If so, would he prefer to leave the business of mollifying Moss to Bunker and Komer or to have an attempt at feather-soothing done from this end? In the latter case, should Rusk lead (Bill Macomber?) or regular White House liaison (Barefoot Sanders?), or this office?

Bill
William Leonhart

Attachment:

Exchange of letters between
Congressman Moss and RWK.

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DOCUMENT RELEASED PER E.O. 13526
DATE 10-10-2009 BY 60321 JST/MS/KNO
E.O. 13526, 10-10-2009

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JOHN E. MOSS, CALIF., CHA.
PORTER HARDY, JR., VA.
JOHN S. MONAGAN, CONN.
TORBERT H. MACDONALD, MASS.

NINETIETH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

ODDEN R. REID, N.Y.
DONALD RUMSFELD, ILL.
ROBERT DOLE, KANS.

CAPITOL 5-3741

336

FOREIGN OPERATIONS AND GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM B371-B
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

September 20, 1967

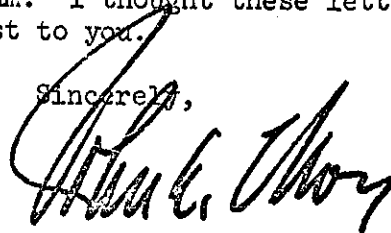
9/25

Mr. William L. Leonhart
Special Assistant to the President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Leonhart:

Enclosed are copies of correspondence exchanged
with Ambassador Robert W. Komer on pacification
programs in South Vietnam. I thought these letters
might be of some interest to you.

Sincerely,



JOHN E. MOSS
Chairman

JEM:paj

Encls.

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

FOREIGN OPERATIONS AND GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM B371-B
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

September 21, 1967

Ambassador Robert W. Komer
Embassy of the United States of America
Saigon, Vietnam

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

Your letter to me dated August 29, 1967 on the propriety of views I expressed to Secretary of State Dean Rusk relating to the pacification program in South Vietnam was offensive. Furthermore, your note to Congressman Ogden Reid, ranking minority member of the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations and Government Information, Committee on Government Operations, was insulting. Both of these communications reveal a lack of understanding of the role of a Congressional investigative committee.

The statement in your letter that, "It is only fair to say that you and the staff did not express vigorous reservations to us out here during your stay," is not accurate. I take strong and vigorous exception to that statement, Mr. Ambassador, since it is simply not true. During the period of my stay in Vietnam my colleague, Congressman Jeffery Cohelan, and I spent most of our time with you and other senior and operating officials of the mission discussing the problems relating to pacification. This was done not only in Saigon but in Bien Hoa and in Nha Trang. Additionally, senior pacification representatives met with us and selected staff members in Saigon for a detailed discussion of problems in the pacification area. We also met at length with General Creighton Abrams and Mr. Wade Latham. You probably do not realize that while Congressman Cohelan and I were thus engaged, other members of my staff were looking into other matters that engaged the interest not only of Congressman Reid but of other members of my subcommittee for over a year and a half. The staff of the subcommittee has therefore acquired what I consider a substantial expertise in these matters.

Mr. Ambassador, throughout all my meetings I expressed my strong objections to the recent changes as well as my grave concern for the lack of meaningful progress in this area. Though you cite the fact of elections in 1037 villages and 4616 hamlets as indication of progress, may I remind you there are over 2500 villages and 12,500 hamlets in South Vietnam.

I have consistently questioned the creation of the CORBS organization. Everyone we talked with reassured us on the fact that the GCO organization was making progress and expressed doubt as to why it had to be changed.

I have stated my views in unequivocal terms that U. S. representatives and officials in Vietnam should take a firmer stand in order to convince the Government of Vietnam that they must vigorously press for necessary social and economic reforms and that the cooperation of that government is essential if the confidence of the people of the United States in U. S. involvement in Vietnam is to be retained.

I am not charging a total lack of progress in pacification. Your letter notes the number of cadre teams currently in the field and that there is a favorable trend. If I am hesitant to accept this statement as being factually accurate, it is understandable since the program through the years has been constantly changed and new and glowing promises predicted for its success. The progress I look for should be on a more broadly based record than can be presently substantiated.

I appreciate your offer to keep the committee informed and to satisfy any doubts which may have arisen as a result of our most recent trip to Vietnam. I can only assure you that this subcommittee will continue to maintain a very thorough surveillance of programs and operations in Vietnam.

Sincerely,

JOHN E. MOSS
Chairman

JEM:pcj



EMBASSY
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

August 29, 1967

33d
RECEIVED
SEP 6 1967
JOHN E. MOSS

Dear Congressman Moss:

I was quite non-plussed to see from your recent letter to Secretary Rusk that the Foreign Operations and Government Information Subcommittee is "deeply concerned about the lack of meaningful progress and reform in the lagging and floundering pacification program." Since the subcommittee and staff were able to undertake only a very limited investigation of pacification because of their many other inquiries during their recent brief visit to Vietnam, I hope that before drawing any firm conclusions you will allow us out here to explain in more detail what we and the GVN are trying to accomplish. Indeed, we would welcome another visit by the subcommittee or staff for the purpose.

It is only fair to say that you and the staff did not express any such vigorous reservations about pacification to us out here during your stay. Instead you showed concern over possible "militarization" and "Americanization" of the pacification program. I had hoped that we had reassured you adequately on both scores. We have no intention of attempting to take over the GVN's pacification program, which we regard as their business. We can only support and advise. Moreover, after four months' experience with the new U.S. civil/military team, I can assure you that civilians remain in the key positions of responsibility under the U.S. military commands for all pacification support. For example, about half the Senior Provincial Advisor positions are filled by civilians—even though the bulk of their staffs are military. So are all of the key deputy slots at the corps level. I personally manage the entire pacification advisory program as General Westmoreland's deputy, and the Saigon staff responsible for pacification is headed by another civilian, Wade Latham. It includes many more civilians than military. We are in no danger of being submerged or militarized. You can depend on it.

As you know, progress in pacification depends critically on adequate security in the countryside, which is now being provided in greater measure because of growing military success. One major 1967 breakthrough is that a high and increasing proportion of the Vietnamese armed forces, including 55 regular army battalions, is now directly involved in providing all-important security for the pacifiers. We also now have some 450 59-man RD teams and 109 Montagnard teams, a substantial improvement over 1966. Our new Hamlet Evaluation System indicates a continuing favorable trend in pacification and in the population coming under government control. During 1967

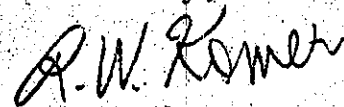
2.

to date, local officials were elected in 1,037 villages and 4,616 hamlets in the countryside.

For these and many other reasons Ambassador Bunker, General Westmoreland, and I are all increasingly pleased with the slowly growing momentum in pacification. While it still has many flaws, the GVN's 1967 program is far superior and achieving far greater results than it did in 1966, when it really first got underway. I am unaware of a single category in which there has been overall regression, although progress is still slower than we would like, and there are setbacks as well as successes. We are confident that the GVN with our help will do still better in 1968.

Hence I urge, as one who has always sought to be helpful to the committee, that you allow us an opportunity to satisfy any subcommittee doubts before issuing your report. We are eager to be of service, and would be delighted to have you spend more time with us.

Sincerely,



R. W. Komer
Ambassador

cc: Congressman Ogden Reid, Jr.

Hon. John E. Moss
The House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY FOR COMUS
UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND
VIETNAM

RECEIVED

SEP 18 1967

JOHN E. MOSS

to. Congressman Reid

It is really quite hard on us out here who are trying to do a job which needs doing to get whacked about "lagging and floundering." You didn't come along on the last trip, but I can assure you that in their all too brief time in Vietnam the Chairman and staff had mighty little time available to spend on pacification, and heard little to warrant such a claim. What happened?

Warmly,

R. W. Komer

Attach.

DATE. August 29, 1967