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Pres file

Friday, October 20, 1967  
10:45 a.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith Nick Katzenbach's  
evaluation of Sen. Symington's  
proposal.

W. W. Rostow

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THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

October 19, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Response to Senator Symington's  
Proposal of October 2

1. Senator Symington proposes a "cessation of all military action in South Viet-Nam as well as North Viet-Nam...in the earnest hope that [this] would result in prompt and meaningful negotiations." If the NVA and the VC continue hostilities after we stop, then, Symington says, we "would feel free to pursue this war in any manner of [our] own choosing."

2. Symington's proposal reflects a clumsily formulated hawk-dove position that we will see more of as frustration with the prolonged and limited effort makes allies of all those whose primary interest is a quick end to the war. But there are many dangers to this approach, and it would probably end up satisfying neither side:

- The odds are overwhelmingly against DRV acceptance of negotiations as a result of such a public offer, with its implied ultimatum and time limits.
- The only purpose of formulating cessation of military actions in this way would be to justify major escalation. Therefore, all those urging a cessation as the first step towards a settlement of the conflict would regard the offer as a phony and as an excuse for all-out attack on the North. Those advocating a wider war would use Hanoi's continued fighting to justify major escalatory steps.

  
Nicholas deB. Katzenbach