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Pres file

Wednesday, October 18, 1967
12:10 p.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith an objective analysis
of Gov. Romney's reference to your
July 28, 1965, press conference.

W. W. Rostow

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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October 17, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ROSTOW

SUBJECT: Romney's Appearance on "Meet the Press"

Romney referred to the President's press conference of July 28, 1965, at which the President announced that our forces in Viet-Nam were being raised immediately from 75,000 to 125,000 men and that additional forces would be sent later as required. Romney said, "He was asked very directly at a press conference on July 28, 1965, if that represented any change in policy or objectives and he said, no. That we were still only going to protect our own installations and step into emergency situations to help the South Vietnamese. And I got this story all the time I was in South Viet-Nam because that was established policy. But it wasn't an accurate reflection of what we were in the process of doing and that is why I am concerned about whether this talk about self-interest and national interest means we are now going to broaden our effort in a military way."

The transcript of the President's July 28 press conference gives the following exchange:

"Question: Mr. President, does the fact that you are sending additional forces to Viet-Nam imply any change in the existing policy of relying mainly on the South Vietnamese to carry out offensive operations and using American forces to guard American installations and to act as an emergency backup?"

"The President: It does not imply any change in policy whatever. It does not imply any change of objective."

I do not think we can take exception to Romney's description of the press conference exchange. We could cavil about his using part of the question as if it were an answer, but that would be nitpicking and a losing gambit.

Nor, in view of later developments, is there any profit for us in arguing with Romney's assertion that the "established policy" was not "an accurate reflection of what we were in the process of doing."

Romney's comments about the July 28 press conference was not picked up by the AP, UPI, the Washington Post, or the New York Times. We would lose more than we would gain from calling attention to it. In short, my strong recommendation is that we not try to rebut this particular comment by Romney. He will undoubtedly give us more attractive targets to shoot at in the weeks to come.



Marshall Wright