

INFORMATION

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Tuesday, November 7, 1967
5:15 p.m.

Pres file

Mr. President:

Westy on Gavin and Vietnam.

W. W. Rostow

MAC 10596

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WWRostow:rln

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)
White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983
By rg, NARA, Date 11-18-91

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1. JIMMY GAVIN AND STY WAINWRIGHT DEPARTED VIETNAM THIS MORNING FOR BANGKOK. THEY WILL CONFER WITH AMBASSADOR UNGER IN BANGKOK AND TRAVEL TO MANILA TODAY. THEY PLAN TO DEPART MANILA FOR RETURN TO CONUS TOMORROW AFTERNOON, 8 NOVEMBER.

2. GAVIN VISITED ALL FOUR CORPS AREAS, CONFERRED WITH ALL VIETNAMESE CORPS COMMANDERS AND SENIOR US OFFICIALS, BOTH CIVILIAN AND MILITARY, IN EACH CORPS AREA. HE MET WITH ADVISORS AND GVN OFFICIALS DOWN TO THE HAMLET LEVEL. ONLY MAJOR US UNIT VISITED WAS 1ST AIR CAV. AT THE CONCLUSION OF HIS 4-DAY FIELD TRIP, HE SPENT A DAY IN SAIGON WHERE HE CALLED ON PRES. THIEU, VICE PRES. KY, (JGS) General VICE CHIEF OF STAFF THANG, THE FRENCH CONSULATE GENERAL AND OTHER *Joint General Staff*

OFFICIALS. I HAD A SMALL DINNER FOR HIM LAST NIGHT AND INVITED ABRAMS, KOMER, ZORTHIAN, MOMYER, BRUCE PALMER, CHUCK COOPER, AND KEY MEMBERS OF MY STAFF. ALTHOUGH THE SAIGON PRESS HAS BEEN INTERESTED IN TALKING TO HIM ALL ALONG THE WAY, GAVIN CONSISTENTLY HELD THE POSITION THAT HE HAD NO STATEMENTS TO MAKE UNTIL HE HAD TIME TO THINK ABOUT WHAT HE HAD SEEN AND HEARD. FRANKLY, HE WAS VERY GOOD IN AVOIDING PUBLIC STATEMENTS. HE DID, HOWEVER, DINE WITH DEAN BRELIS, PETER ARNETT, AND ONE OR TWO OTHER MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES WHEN HE WAS IN SAIGON.

3. GAVIN WAS DEEPLY APPRECIATIVE FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE A FIRST HAND LOOK AT THE SITUATION OUT HERE. HE WAS MOST COMPLIMENTARY OF THE ITINERARY WHICH HAD BEEN PLANNED FOR HIM AND THE FREEDOM ALLOWED HIM IN MAKING CHANGES AND ADJUSTMENTS WHICH WERE FEW. HE TOLD ME HE WAS IMMENSELY IMPRESSED BY THE AMERICANS OUT HERE AND SURPRISED AT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE (RVNAF). HE IMPLIED THAT HE AGREED WITH THE TROOP DISPOSITIONS THAT HAD BEEN MADE IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND SHARES TO SOME DEGREE OUR ESTIMATE THAT WE ARE HURTING THE ENEMY IN THE SOUTH. HE WAS QUICK TO REAFFIRM HIS CONVICTION THAT THE BROAD NATIONAL STRATEGY, WITH RESPECT TO VIETNAM, IS DEFECTIVE. HE CONTENDS THAT HE IS NOT, REPEAT, NOT A PROONENT OF

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WITHDRAWAL OR OF FURTHER ESCALATION, BUT HE FEELS THAT OUR POLICY OF CONTINUED AND UNRELENTING PRESSURE, BOTH IN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH, DOES NOT SHOW MUCH PROMISE FOR ANYTHING BUT MORE OF THE SAME. (HE MEANS BY THIS "A LONG AND EXPENSIVE COMMITMENT OF U.S. RESOURCES FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD OF TIME.") HE CONSISTENTLY REFERRED TO THE DOMESTIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS AT HOME, THE MASSIVE DEFICIT IN OUR BUDGET, THE 10 PER CENT SURCHARGE, THE IMPAIRING IMPACT OF THIS WAR ON OUR ABILITY TO COPE WITH PROBLEMS IN NATO AND THE MIDDLE EAST, AND THE SIGNIFICANT LACK OF SUPPORT FOR OUR VIETNAM POLICY BY OUR ALLIES. HE REPEATEDLY STATED THAT WE MUST DO SOMETHING VERY SOON TO BRING ABOUT NEGOTIATIONS. WHEN QUERIED AS TO SPECIFICS, HE INVARIABLY RESPONDED THAT AS THE FIRST STEP, WE SHOULD CEASE BOMBING IN THE NORTH AND CONSIDER "STOPPING THE SHOOTING" IN THE SOUTH. HE IMPLIED THAT WE SHOULD TAKE THESE INITIATIVES WITHOUT DEMANDING A QUID PRO QUO FROM THE OTHER SIDE. HE BELIEVES THESE STEPS ARE THE ONLY WAY TO PROVIDE THE FACE SAVING AVENUE THAT WILL LEAD HANOI TO THE CONFERENCE TABLE.

4. WAINWRIGHT OBVIOUSLY HAS AN IMPORTANT INFLUENCE ON GAVIN'S THINKING AND APPARENTLY SHARES GAVIN'S VIEWS, BUT MAY HAVE MODERATED HIS POSITION BY THE EXPERIENCE.

5. IN SUM, I THINK THE VISIT WAS WORTHWHILE FOR GAVIN, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF HIS ABSENCE FROM THIS COUNTRY FOR WELL OVER TEN YEARS. HE APPARENTLY WAS IMPRESSED WITH THE AMERICAN TEAM HERE AND HAS HAD HIS MIND CHANGED SOMEWHAT REGARDING RVNAF EFECTIVENESS. HE MAY CONCEDE THAT WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS IN THE FIELD AND IN PACIFICATION. HIS PRINCIPAL QUARREL REMAINS CENTERED ON THE US STRATEGIC POLICY CONNECTED WITH OUR INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM AND HIS BELIEF THAT THIS IS HAVING AN ALMOST DISASTROUS EFFECT IN INTERNATIONAL, DOMESTIC AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS.

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