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FM AMBASSADOR BUNKER SAIGON 509

TO THE WHITE HOUSE, EXCLUSIVE FOR MR. ROSTOW

SECSTATE, EXCLUSIVE FOR SECRETARY RUSK

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DISCUSSION WITH GENERAL LOAN ON 6 NOVEMBER 1967

1. ON 6 NOVEMBER, A CAS OFFICER BRIEFED GENERAL LOAN ON

5 NOVEMBER DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT THIEU

THIEU'S CONCLUSION THAT OUR SIDE SHOULD MAKE

AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE AND THIEU'S

REQUEST THAT LOAN BRIEF THIEU ON

THE BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION CONCERNING THOSE VC WHO WERE ARRESTED

AND WHOM

ASKED TO BE RELEASED. LOAN WAS ALSO GIVEN A COPY OF THE
MESSAGE (VIETNAMESE TEXT) WHICH HE THEN PROCEEDED TO READ. HE
COMMENTED THAT THE NLF IS CONFUSING THE ISSUE WHEN IT DISCUSSES GVN
MISTREATMENT OF VC PRISONERS SINCE THESE INDIVIDUALS ARE SPIES AND
SABOTEURS, NOT MILITARY PRISONERS OF WAR, THAT THE GVN DOES NOT
MISTREAT POW'S, AND FURTHER, THAT THE NLF WOULD NOT ONLY MISTREAT
ANY GVN SPIES WHICH THEY APPREHENDED BUT WOULD SUMMARILY EXECUTE
THEM AFTER EXTRACTING WHATEVER INFORMATION THEY COULD FROM THEM.

LOAN ALSO REMARKED WHILE READING THE MESSAGE
THAT THE NLF IS INCONSISTENT IN STATING THAT THEY ARE WILLING TO
TALK ABOUT BROADER ISSUES THAN THE POW EXCHANGE, WHILE IN THE SAME
MESSAGE INDICATING THAT IT IS NOT NOW THE RIGHT TIME TO TALK PEACE.

2. LOAN'S CONCLUSION AND PRESENT POSITION IS THAT BY

RELEASING [REDACTED] FROM PRISON TO ACT AS AN COURIER [REDACTED]
THE GVN HAS ALREADY DEMONSTRATED ITS GOOD FAITH AND IT IS NOW UP
TO THE NLF TO MAKE A POSITIVE GESTURE OF ITS OWN GOOD FAITH BY
RELEASING ONE U.S. AIR FORCE PILOT AND ONE U.S. ARMY INFANTRY
OFFICER UPON RECEIPT OF OUR NEXT MESSAGE WHICH [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] WOULD OUTLINE OUR PRESENT POSITION
PER THE FOREGOING. LOAN FEELS THAT FOR US TO GO BEYOND THIS AT THIS
STAGE WOULD DETRACT FROM OUR FUTURE LEVERAGE AND BARGAINING POSITION
WHEN AND IF WE SHOULD EVER ENGAGE IN ANY SUBSTANTIVE POLITICAL
DISCUSSIONS AFTER A PRISONER EXCHANGE HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. LOAN
ALSO FEELS THAT A MATTER OF "HONOR" IS INVOLVED BETWEEN THE GVN AND
THE NLF, AND THAT THE NLF IS EXCESSIVE IN THE CONDITIONS WHICH IT
DEMANDS AND WHICH MUST BE MET BEFORE THEY ARE WILLING TO DISCUSS
SPECIFICS OF A PRISONER EXCHANGE AND PERHAPS LATER THE BROADER
POLITICAL ISSUES.

3. LOAN COMMENTED THAT HE "DOES NOT GIVE A DAMN" ABOUT [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] BEING RELEASED SINCE HE ALREADY PLANS TO SEND HIM AND OTHER VIET
CONG ABROAD ON A PROPAGANDA MISSION, BUT THAT HE OBJECTS TO HIS
RELEASE BECAUSE THE NLF IS ASKING FOR TOO MUCH AT THIS POINT. LOAN
FURTHER FEELS THAT THE NLF IS ASKING FOR A GREAT DEAL WHEN THEY
REQUEST THAT ALL PRISONERS ARRESTED BECAUSE [REDACTED] INTERROGATION
BE RELEASED BECAUSE, IN FACT, THE NLF PROBABLY DOES NOT KNOW WHO ALL
HAVE BEEN APPREHENDED, AND ARE HOPING THIS PLOY WILL NOT ONLY INFORM
THEM WHICH OF THEIR AGENTS HAVE BEEN PICKED UP BY THE GVN, BUT WILL ALSO
SUCCEED IN OBTAINING THEIR RELEASE. IF THE NLF WERE CERTAIN WHICH
OF THEIR AGENTS ARE NOW IN THE HANDS OF THE POLICE, THEY WOULD HAVE
LISTED THEM BY NAME. LOAN DISMISSED THE ISSUE OF BETTER TREATMENT
FOR THE INDIVIDUALS MENTIONED IN [REDACTED] MESSAGE AS "NO PROBLEM,"
AND REMARKED THAT THIS WOULD BE "EASY ENOUGH TO ARRANGE." LOAN WAS
QUITE SPECIFIC, HOWEVER, IN HIS FEELING THAT [REDACTED] WOULD NOT LIKELY
BE WILLING TO RETURN TO THE NLF'S SECRET ZONE BECAUSE HE IS "AFRAID"
TO DO SO NOW, AFTER HAVING UNDERGONE EXTENSIVE INTERROGATION BY THE
GVN AND HAVING REVEALED CONSIDERABLE INFORMATION ABOUT HIS
COLLEAGUES, ETC., WHICH IS AGAINST THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE NLF.

4. LOAN AGREED TO PREPARE DOSSIERS ON ALL PRISONERS MENTIONED
IN [REDACTED] MESSAGE, AS WELL AS PRISONERS ARRESTED BECAUSE OF
THE INTERROGATION [REDACTED] HE WILL PRESENT THIS INFORMATION TO
PRESIDENT THIEU AND WILL ALSO GIVE ONE COPY OF EACH DOSSIER TO
[REDACTED] LOAN STATED HE WOULD RELEASE WHOMEVER PRESIDENT
THIEU "ORDERS" HIM TO REL EASE, BUT FEELS FIRMLY THAT OUR SIDE HAS
DONE AS MUCH AS IT SHOULD AT THIS STAGE AND SHOULD NOW WAIT FOR A
SHOW OF FAITH BY THE NLF.

5. LOAN FEELS THAT THE NLF MIGHT WELL RESPOND FAVORABLY TO OUR NEXT MESSAGE CALLING FOR THE RELEASE OF ONE U.S. AIR FORCE PILOT AND ONE U.S. ARMY INFANTRY OFFICER AS A SHOW OF GOOD FAITH ON THE PART OF THE NLF AS A MEASURE TO CONTINUE RECIPROCAL MOVES ON PRISONER EXCHANGE. LOAN RECOMMENDS THAT WE ASK THE NLF TO SPECIFY WHICH VC PRISONERS THEY WOULD LIKE OUR SIDE TO RELEASE AND OUR NEXT STEP WOULD BE TO COMPLY ACCORDINGLY. THIS MOVE ON OUR PART WOULD IN TURN HOPEFULLY LEAD TO A CONTINUATION AND ESCALATION IN TERMS OF NUMBERS OF PRISONERS TO BE EXCHANGED ON BOTH SIDES FROM THAT POINT FORWARD.

6. REGARDING THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS BY THE GVN UNDER THE 1 NOVEMBER AMNESTY FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS, LOAN STATED THAT THE INDIVIDUALS THE NLF IS ASKING BE RELEASED

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A RE NOT EVEN FORMALLY CHARGED WITH ANY SPECIFIC OFFENSES AND, THEREFORE, ARE NOT TECHNICALLY ELIGIBLE FOR AMNESTY RELEASE AS SUCH. LOAN REMARKED THAT, OF COURSE, THEY COULD BE TOLD THAT THEIR RELEASE WAS WITHIN THE SAME GENERAL FRAMEWORK AS THE 1 NOVEMBER AMNESTY DECLARATION AND IS THE RESULT OF THE GVN'S LIBERAL ATTITUDE TOWARD POLITICAL PRISONERS, AND THIS WOULD SUFFICE AS COVER FOR THE RELEASE OF THESE PRISONERS.

7. LOAN CLEARLY DOES NOT PUT MUCH STOCK IN RESULTS TO BE DERIVED FROM DISCUSSIONS WITH THE NLF COMMAND ECHELON, EVEN THOUGH HE FEELS THE PRISONER EXCHANGE CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED TO SOME DEGREE, AND EVEN THOUGH IT IS HIS OPINION THAT HANOI IS AT LEAST GENERALLY AWARE OF THE NLF EFFORTS, BOTH ON THE PRISONER EXCHANGE AND THEIR OPENING GAMBIT TO DISCUSS THE BROADER POLITICAL ISSUES.

8. OUR NEXT STEP WILL BE TO OBTAIN THE BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON THE PRISONERS WHICH THE NLF HAS ASKED TO BE RELEASED, WHILE LOAN IS BRIEFING PRESIDENT THIEU ON THE SAME BACKGROUND INFORMATION. AFTER WE HAVE REVIEWED THE BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON THESE PRISONERS, WE WILL BE ABLE TO FORMULATE OUR NEXT APPROACH TO PRESIDENT THIEU AND RECOMMEND A SPECIFIC COURSE OF ACTION WHICH WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPLEMENTED.

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By CL, NARA Date 6-18-96

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REFS: A. WASHINGTON 49639

B. SAIGON 499 (MEETING WITH PRESIDENT THIEU)

C. SAIGON 509 (MEETING WITH GENERAL LOAN)

FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR BUNKER

1. IN LIGHT OF YOUR COMMENTS IN REF A AND NOW THAT THE
RETURNS ARE IN FROM OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH PRESIDENT THIEU
AND LOAN (REFS B AND C), WE CONCUR WITH YOUR SUGGESTED REPLY
IN PARA FIVE WITH CERTAIN ADDITIONS, FOR REASONS I WILL
DESCRIBE BELOW.

2. FROM OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH THIEU AND LOAN IT IS
OBVIOUS THAT THEY BOTH FEEL WE SHOULD GIVE NO MORE
THAN HE REQUESTED, THAT THEY DISTRUST [REDACTED] BUT, AS THIEU
PUTS IT, WE MUST "TEST" THE NLFSVN SINCERITY ALTHOUGH HE DOUBTS
THEY ARE SERIOUS. LOAN GOES EVEN FURTHER IN SUGGESTING WE
SHOULD FORCE THE NLFSVN TO SHOW ITS GOOD FAITH BY RELEASING
TWO PRISONERS WE NAME BECAUSE THE GVN HAS ALREADY RELEASED
[REDACTED] AND WOULD BE RELEASING [REDACTED] TO COMPLY WITH
MINIMUS REQUIREMENTS. (I KNOW YOU AGREE THAT
WE MUST RESPECT THE OPINIONS AND SUGGESTIONS OF THE GVN NOW AND

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b(1) PAGE 2 SAIGON 526 [REDACTED]

IN THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS MATTER. THEY ARE, IN EVERY RESPECT, CO-EQUALS IN THIS NEGOTIATION. I, THEREFORE, SUGGEST THAT WE BE PREPARED IN PARA FIVE REF A INGOING MESSAGE TO REQUEST [REDACTED] RELEASE TWO AMERICAN POWS (TO BE NAMED AT YOUR DISCRETION) TO SHOW HIS (THEIR) GOOD FAITH. IF [REDACTED] RESPONDS FAVORABLY, WE WILL HAVE TELESCOPED THE TIME ELEMENT I FORSEE BETWEEN NOW AND THE INITIAL RELEASE OF POWS.

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b(1) 3. BOTH IN THE INGOING MESSAGE AND IN THE ORAL BRIEFING WE PLAN TO GIVE [REDACTED] WE WILL STRESS THE NEED FOR SAFE AND RAPID MEANS OF FUTURE COMMUNICATIONS AND URGE [REDACTED] TO OPEN THE RADIO LINK. I AM NOT SANGUINE, HOWEVER, THAT [REDACTED] WILL USE THE RADIO COMMUNICATIONS CHANNEL AT ALL. AND IF THEY DO, THEN ONLY AT A MUCH LATER DATE. WE ARE, THEREFORE, FACED WITH THE PROBABILITY THAT EVEN IF WE CAN ARRANGE TO HAVE [REDACTED] ALRIKTED TO A POINT CLOSER THAT TAY NINH CITY, SUBSEQUENT DIALOGUE AND ARRANGEMENTS WILL AT BEST BE CUMBERSOME, TEDIOUS AND TIME CONSUMING. IN SHORT, QUICK REACTION BY OUR SIDE AND THE OTHER WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE IN THIS CONTEXT.

4. RE SUBJECT OF RESPONDING TO BROADER POLITICAL QUESTIONS

3.4
b(1) PAGE 3 SAIGON 526 [REDACTED]

RAISED [REDACTED] AS YOU KNOW PRESIDENT THIEU RESERVES TO HIMSELF A KEY ROLE IN DECIDING ON WHAT WILL BE SAID IN OUR JOINT RESPONSE. HIS POSITION IN THIS MATTER PROMISES TO BE ONE OF GREAT RESTRAINING, DISTRUST, AND CYNICISM; THEREFORE, I PLAN ON GETTING HIS CONCURRENCE IN A RESPONSE [REDACTED] THAT WILL BE BRIEF, AVOID GIVING THE OTHER SIDE TOO MUCH OPPORTUNITY FOR THEIR FAMOUS AFFINITY TOWARDS POLEMICS WHILE RETTERATING OUR OBJECTIVES AND AIMS IN VIETNAM AND ENCOURAGING THE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER EXCHANGES OF VIEWPOINTS EITHER IN THE ESTABLISHED COVERT CHANNEL OR IN PERSONAL MEETINGS AT A LOCALE AGGREABLE TO ALL CONCERNED. I WILL SEPA RATELY FORWARD A SUGGESTED RESPONSE, ON THESE POLITICAL ASPECTS, THAT MAY BE ACCEPTABLE TO PRESIDENT THIEU AND SUBJECT TO YOUR PRIOR CONCURRENCE.

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THERE A FEW SLIGHTLY GARBLED WORDS WHICH I'M SURE U CAN EASILY CORRECT
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