

ACTION

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for file

Saturday, November 18, 1967
12:30 p.m.

Mr. President:

Quite unsolicited, Max Taylor has written the attached memorandum to you after reading my summary of suggestions for action in the wake of the Advisory Group meeting of November 2 (also attached).

You may wish to go down the list and check the items -- if any -- on which you wish me to follow through.

My general impression is that we have made big strides in the directions indicated during the past week:

-- Above all, by your press conference with its projection of confidence, moderate progress, and a will to sustain the effort;

-- By the emergence of two fresh faces in the debate: Bunker and Westmoreland;

-- By Westy's vision of the beginning of a U. S. troop withdrawal within two years as the ARVN build up.

Nevertheless, evidently, the job is not done; and, if you agree with Gen. Taylor, I would be glad to try to make more happen.

W. W. Rostow

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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November 17, 1967

Mr. President:

In reading Walt Rostow's memo of record of the meeting in the Cabinet Room on November 2nd (Acheson, Dean, Lodge, Murphy, etc.), I am impressed by the unanimity of feeling that we must take far more vigorous action to stabilize public support for our policy in Vietnam. There were several specific suggestions advanced at that meeting, all of which seemed to me worthy of serious consideration.

So far as I know, there has been no follow-up on these suggestions and this is what occasions this memorandum. In spite of your great personal exertions, I do not see organized action taking shape to give you the kind of country-wide back-up support which I think you will need on a continuing basis. Someone needs to be put in charge of the formulation of a comprehensive plan and then of its implementation after your approval.

Such a plan would be for the purpose of informing and keeping informed important sectors of domestic and international public opinion with regard to the objectives of U.S. policy in Vietnam, the global significance of that policy, the progress being made toward its objectives, the possible alternatives to this policy and their pros and cons. The sectors serving as targets for this informational effort should include:

- a. The policy-makers of press, radio, T.V.
- b. Leading teachers, ministers, columnists, broadcasters.
- c. Political leaders and candidates of both parties.
- d. Business leaders.
- e. General U.S. public.
- f. Selected targets abroad.

The means used to address these targets could include a wide variety of devices such as the usual speeches, news conferences and T.V. appearances of U.S. officials; citizens committees in large cities supported from Washington by speakers and literature; White House briefings of big shots of the political, business and publicity media worlds; trips to Vietnam by senior citizens on the model of the Election Observer trip; visits to the United States by Asian leaders with a stake in the outcome in Vietnam; a government sponsored T.V. program to answer citizens' questions bearing on Vietnam; a Central Vietnam Information Center involving State, Defense, JCS, AID and USIS representatives to

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serve the working press in Washington; aggressive publicity by U.S. embassies abroad; special Presidential missions to international leaders whose support is sought for our Vietnam policy.

The practical question is (1) how to get such a plan put together and (2) then how to get it carried out effectively.

The plan could be drawn up by Walt Rostow and his assistants, by a sub-committee of the members of the November 2nd meeting, by a sub-committee of the Citizens Committee for Peace with Freedom in Vietnam (the Douglas Committee which includes former Presidents Truman and Eisenhower), by the Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG), or by any individual you may wish to appoint. It could be implemented by a White House appointee with Presidential authority to call for help throughout government, by an executive director working under the SIG or by an executive director under the Citizens Committee. There are probably other alternatives which could be thought up.

Personally, I am not sure how is the best way to proceed at this juncture but I am sure that an effort needs to be organized in a way that will produce continuing results. If you are in general agreement with the thrust of this paper, I suggest that you ask Walt Rostow to start people and things moving in the general direction outlined above.

MD2
M. D. T.

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Friday, November 3, 1967

MR. PRESIDENT:

I did not take full notes in yesterday's advisory meeting; but I did try to list suggestions for action.

Here is my list.

Dean Acheson:

- organize citizen's committees in all cities over 100,000;
- get fresh faces to defend our Viet Nam policy.

McGeorge Bundy:

- cool attention to bombing: make it routine;
- reward in White House ceremonies those who have done great work in the provinces, military and civilians;
- assure that military men on advisory duty in pacification are promoted on same basis as those in combat;
- develop publicity that Vietnamese are doing more, and make sure they do;
- shift our stance on negotiations to one of not expecting negotiations until after November 1968;
- dramatize that we have already won a great strategic victory in Asia: lift people's eyes from Viet Nam to the whole scene;
- brief the key editors and communicators just as the group was briefed (Dick Helms has no objection to using Carver when it's off-the-record and no public attribution);
- let good news speak for itself: don't strain publicly to convince people progress is being made.

Douglas Dillon:

- spend time not on how we got into Viet Nam, but on position we're in and real choices we face;
- clarify what we are doing on the ground and in bombing;

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Douglas Dillon (cont'd)

- develop sense of progress: sense of stalemate is what invites extreme doves and hawks; let events speak for themselves, but there are ways of getting good news out;
- have Bunker -- a fresh and trusted voice -- report to the nation;
- the President should brief top college presidents and deans as Advisory Group was briefed.

Arthur Dean:

- clarify our "get out of Viet Nam" position: if we're really going to get out, why spend all this blood and treasure?
- explain critical importance of Viet Nam to our Asia and Pacific positions: people don't understand implications for U.S. national interest of loss of Viet Nam;
- avoid another Panmunjom.

Cabot Lodge:

- an independent audit of the pace and success of the revamping and re-orientation of the ARVN;
- limit U. S. casualties by diminishing "search and destroy" operations, substituting a doctrine of "split up and keep off balance";
- encourage a "true revolution" in South Viet Nam by throwing our weight behind private cooperative institutions such as farmers' unions, marketing organizations, which would stimulate, agitate, and engage the people themselves and begin to push the French and Chinese middlemen to the wall. (WWR comment: the French and Chinese businessmen ought to be moving into light industry at this stage of Vietnamese development.)
- agreed with Acheson on a no-bombing versus DMZ deal;
- urged that Bunker and his views be given maximum exposure.

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Robert Murphy:

- sharpen focus and action against small group of Hanoi villains: we have no target for hate in this, as opposed to other wars.

General Omar Bradley:

- talk less about negotiations: Hanoi takes it as a sign of weakness;
- use "Patience" as a slogan;

General Maxwell Taylor:

- questions close-in defense of DMZ;
- decide what we are prepared to offer the VC; that is a major gap in our policy and ought to be filled;
- bombing should not be traded against DMZ pressure but against level of VC incidents in the South: bombing is our equivalent of guerrilla warfare;
- organize nationwide, continuous campaign of speeches in support of policy;
- organize an hour TV program regularly: government replies to its citizens on Viet Nam, answering questions.

George Ball:

- stop bombing, except across the DMZ, to create climate for negotiation.

Abe Fortas:

- get George Carver to briefing on television. (Dean Acheson, Dick Helms, and others objected to using Carver in public.)

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Clark Clifford:

-- bring Thieu to the United States (Nick Katzenbachⁿ implied we should make sure his political base in Saigon would be safe during such a tour).

W. W. R.