

INFORMATION

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Saturday, December 16, 1967  
6:00 p.m.

Mr. President:

If all goes well, the attached letter, now being signed by Sec. Rusk at his house, will be on the wire by about 6:30 p.m. tonight.

*Pres file*

W. W. Rostow

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THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

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Dear Congressmen Moss and Reid:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of December 14 regarding problems of land reform in Viet-Nam. I welcome the expression of your views. We, too, are looking forward to further action by the Government of South Viet-Nam with respect to land matters, and in fact in the whole broader field of agricultural development and reform.

The new Government of South Viet-Nam, inaugurated October 31, has made it clear that it intends to take further action in this field. For example, Prime Minister Loc, in the "Action Program" he outlined for his Government on November 15, said:

"The Government will distribute public lands to peasants, re-establish 500,000 expired land leases, and issue ownership certificates to 110,500 peasants who have purchased expropriated rice fields."

He also stated, in regard to the problem of lands in areas newly secured, his Government would assure the strict application of the land statute which gives farmers the right to continue tilling the land on which they are working and to purchase the land on a priority basis.

I believe you would agree that the above is an encouraging statement of intent on the part of a Government only just beginning to operate under a newly-established constitutional system. As the new regime begins to take action on its stated program, we will, of course, assist and support these measures.

The Honorable John E. Moss and  
The Honorable Ogden R. Reid,  
The House of Representatives,  
Washington, D.C.

There are certain statements in your letter which do not fully reflect the land situation in South Viet-Nam as it is known to us. My staff has not had an opportunity to see the study conducted by the GAO which you say supports your findings and we, of course, would be pleased to comment on it if you wish.

Sincerely,

Dean Rusk