

INFORMATION

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Tuesday, February 6, 1968
3:10 p.m.

Pres file

Mr. President:

This interview between Westy,
Bunker, and Thieu will interest you.
They seem to be taking just the right
time.

W. W. Rostow

Saigon 18269

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WWRostow:rla

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)

White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983

By 49, NARA, Date 1-30-92

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Control: Saigon 18269

Date: FEB. 6, 1968

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

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By ing, NARA, Date 6-12-90

History

1. General Westmoreland and I spent about an hour and a quarter with President Thieu afternoon February 6. Thieu opened the conversation by calling attention to Vice President Ky's TV address last night informing people about the Task Force and its purposes. Thieu noted that this program was moving ahead and that Ky was in fact visiting today I Corps/with Komer.
2. I stressed to Thieu how important it was to keep the people informed about the GVN's efforts. It seemed to me that this was the psychological moment to galvanize the population and to develop their support for the GVN and their opposition

to the Viet Cong. I urged that Thieu make frequent brief

Drafted by POL:JACalhou:dv

Approving Officer

AUTH: Amb. Bunker

[Concurrence: Feb. 6, 1968]

FORM 88-202
(8-68)

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appearances on radio and TV to tell the people what is going on and to seek their support. I said that I had many reports, not only from Saigon but also from the provinces, that the people were angry and resentful at the Viet Cong treachery on Tet, and I thought he should capitalize speedily on this mood. I said that we wanted to help and participate in this effort in any way that he thought useful. I left with him a detailed memorandum of suggestions for such information activities.

3. I suggested to Thieu that other cabinet members, especially those supervising specific emergency activities -- such as public health, refugees, welfare, public works -- also speak to the people about their programs and intentions. Moreover, other notables in Vietnamese life should be involved in all of these activities and should be encouraged to stimulate efforts by the population. I cited as an example the

mobilization of labor support, observing that we had been

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(8-48)

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impressed that the working population even in the poorest sections had not risen to support the VC. I said that I understood they wanted to help and were capable of contributing to the common effort. I noted some concern among such non-government elements that the government was trying to mobilize and control all the efforts and take all the credit as well.

4. Thieu said this was not the case. He said that one of his concerns was to assure that emergency supplies and programs got to the right people and was not frittered away through too many hands involved in the till. He said he would assure that the present means were properly used. Thieu went on to say that he planned to make an address to the Joint Session of both Houses of the Assembly on Friday, February 9. He noted that there had been critical questions in the Upper House today, particularly questioning why the Government did not know about the VC attack in advance and take
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FORM 73 - 602
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preventive measures. Thieu said the answer was that they knew the VC capability but not the exact timing of such attacks. He also remarked that identifying the VC groups was next to impossible as they came in dressed as civilians mingling with the rest of the people celebrating Tet. Thieu went on to say that he planned to ask the Assembly to confirm the emergency measures taken so far by the GVN and to empower the Government to do whatever is necessary. He said he would warn the Assembly that other measures may be needed to deal with the situation.

5. In connection with the detailed memorandum of suggested information activities that the Government might pursue, I suggested that they make particularly energetic efforts toward the foreign press in order to try to correct the many inaccuracies being reported. I suggested specifically that information Dir. Gen. Link might make himself available one-half hour each day to the foreign press as this would pay

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off real dividends in the U.S. and elsewhere.

6. In connection with additional measures by the GVN.

Westmoreland took up the question of mobilization. He

said that ARVN had performed extremely well during the

VC attacks, that all the division commanders had done

well, and the Corps Commanders had also performed

creditably, but now ARVN faced the problem of rebuilding,

as its losses were high and many officers had been assassi-

nated. Westmoreland said it was necessary to start draft-

ing 19 year olds promptly and to move on to the 18 year olds

fairly soon, to meet the manpower needs. Thieu said he

thought the Assembly would no longer insist on the limits in-

dicated in its earlier discussion of the partial mobilization

decree. He personally saw no problem in drafting the 19 year

olds and the 18 year olds in order to build up the RVNAF by the

65,000 required. Westmoreland gave Thieu the latest statis-

tics on enemy KIA (21,330), detainees (4,727), and weapons
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captured (4, 432 individual and 796 crew-served) as well as friendly KIA (1, 729).

7. I raised with Thieu the urgency of extending the curfew so that conditions could get back to normal as rapidly as possible in the Saigon area. Thieu confirmed that he had approved the Task Force proposal to divide the city into blue and red zones, and to relax the curfew hours immediately in the blue zones. I added that I had reports this afternoon that rice and gasoline were being distributed widely today.

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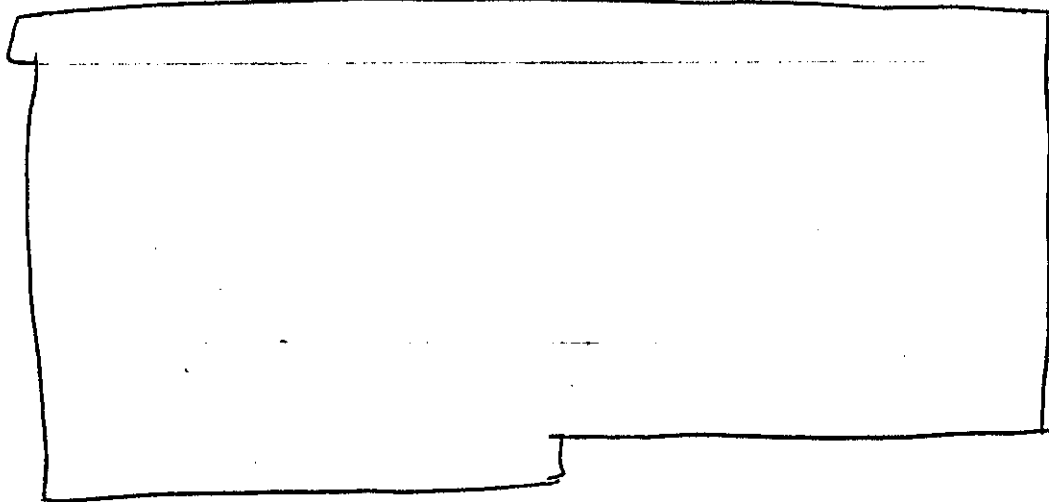
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