

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

February 13, 1968

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To: The President
From: H. C. Lodge *H.C. Lodge*
Subject: Some lessons to be learned from the recent
Viet Cong raids.

1. On the MINUS side are the following:

- a. The great degree of surprise achieved by the Viet Cong confirms the suspicion expressed in my memorandum to you of February 5 that there simply was not enough proficiency in police-type procedures. Had this existed, preparations for many raids would have been discovered and the raids prevented. Those that could not have been wiped out immediately would have been easier to handle. The Australian Ambassador in a perceptive telegram says this:

"We need not be surprised about the success of the infiltrations. The enemy had time and circumstances going for him, particularly the laxity and corruption of the police and the inefficiency of the Government's intelligence machine..."

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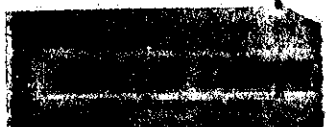
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"What, then, was at fault? Not under-
estimation of the Viet Cong strength, I
suggest, but failure to insist that the
Vietnamese make a genuine effort to pro-
tect themselves against insidious infiltra-
tion, for only the Vietnamese can do this
work. . ."

- b. The pacification program has suffered a big setback. This underscores the need for making it as realistic and as effective as possible and also getting the very best men involved in it. The newspaper story reporting that "no one talks about pacification any more" is fallacious. Undoubtedly greater emphasis on the policing phase of pacification at the precinct level will be needed, but pacification itself is more necessary than ever.
- c. Another "minus" is the psychological distress which the Viet Cong raids have caused in this country -- on which the hand has not yet been played out.
- d. Unfortunate, too, is the government's decision not to collaborate with private organizations in refugee relief work. This is a typically Vietnamese example of

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medieval behavior plus French bureaucratic influence. The "true revolution" which you personally authorized me to mention in my arrival statement in the summer of 1965 is still the most needed single thing to win the people over -- and when the people are won over, the war is won. Such a "true revolution" cannot be done by GVN or AID but by the people themselves, through non-governmental organizations. The notion that problems must be solved by working through government -- which worked in Europe under the Marshall Plan -- cannot work in an underdeveloped country such as Viet-Nam in which there is no local government in our meaning of the word. Government cannot be said to exist when there is no administrative competence, when the confidence of the people is lacking and when the so-called local government does not identify with the people.

- e. The final "minus" are, of course, the killed and wounded on our side.
- 2. On the PLUS side are the following rather remarkable things which were not at first evident:
 - a. To the best of my knowledge there has nowhere been any recurrence of the "struggle" movement which almost


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lost us the war in the first half of 1966. I'm sure you remember how, in Hue and Danang, the police marched down the street carrying anti-government signs and how the government had completely lost jurisdiction over both cities -- which would be comparable to the President of the United States losing jurisdiction over Chicago and Detroit. Similar "inside jobs" were impending in other cities when Prime Minister Ky with great skill and courage finally put the "struggle" down. If there had been a well-organized "struggle" movement in all of the cities which the Viet Cong recently attacked, we would now be very close indeed to a Communist takeover. Our military strength simply would not be applicable in such a situation -- just as our Marine force outside of Danang was not applicable in 1966 when our concern was to keep them out of the way. It was a large~~y~~-meshed net with which to catch whales -- not the fine meshed net with which to catch the small but deadly fish of terrorism.

- b. This interesting development could mean the growth of what you once referred to in a telegram to me in 1964

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as the growth of "political energy" -- a dividend from all the work we have done to bring about constitutional government and a sense of civic consciousness.

- c. It appears there was much good fighting by the ARVN, the Regional Forces and the Popular Forces, which reflects great credit on General Westmoreland and General Abrams. It is a pity that the police-type techniques were not as good or as widespread. If they had been, there would have been less need to fight since many of the raids would have been nipped in the bud.
- d. The high Viet Cong casualties are another plus.
- e. Remarkable too is the lack of back biting and the degree of unity in governmental circles. In 1963-1965, a blow like this would have been considered ample grounds for a "coup."
- f. It is often said that Viet-Nam is drowning in good advice and starving for effective action. The placing of Vice President Ky and General Thang in charge of reconstruction is the best guarantee of getting some action.

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