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Classification

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5/23/68 16 04Z

Origin
Info

ACTION: Amembassy SAIGON PRIORITY

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LITERALLY EYES ONLY FOR THE AMBASSADOR FROM THE SECRETARY

You have already received a staff paper dealing with points US might pursue to increase effectiveness GVN performance. I would much appreciate your urgent comments on the paper.

As you know the President has under immediate consideration a request from General Westmoreland for a major addition to US forces in Viet-Nam between now and the end of the year. To meet this request will require a heavy call up of reserves and a substantial increase in draft calls. Some action on reserves and draft calls will be needed in any event to strengthen our strategic reserve and the manpower base for Viet-Nam.

Such actions would have very far-reaching effects on the total budget and on other most urgent national needs. The resulting debate will test the will of our people to the utmost.

Such a debate will focus sharp and critical attention on

Drafted by S:DRusk:ml	Tel. Ext.	Telegraphic transmission and classification approved by The Secretary
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EA - Mr. Habib
S/S - Mr. Read

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Authority State Sec E2/N
By copy, NARA, Date 4-1-82

Page 2 of telegram to Amembassy SAIGON

~~TOP SECRET~~
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the performance of the South Vietnamese both on the military and the civilian side. I know you are tired of hearing this same old refrain but the question now assumes special urgency. There is considerable public skepticism back here about what we have said in past months and years about South Vietnamese performance. There is also severe criticism in some quarters that we have "Americanized" the war.

I would also appreciate your comments on the effect upon South Vietnamese effort of a substantial increase in American forces, what problems such additional forces might create in Viet-Nam and whether additional deployments from here can be used for effective leverage to increase significantly South Vietnamese performance.

I much appreciate your cool courage in these troubled times. END

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Department of State

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Authority State let 4/25/79

By copy, NARA, Date 4/1/92

LITERALLY EYES ONLY FOR THE SECRETARY FROM BUNKER

REF : STATE 124637

1. I HAVE SENT A REPLY (SAIGON 21733) COMMENTING ON THE STAFF PAPER DEALING WITH MEASURES WE MIGHT TAKE TO INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GVN PERFORMANCE. I DO NOT KNOW THAT I HAVE VERY MUCH TO ADD TO THE COMMENTS CONTAINED IN THAT MESSAGE, BUT I MIGHT MAKE A FEW ADDITIONAL POINTS.

2. I THINK WE HAVE TO RECOGNIZE THE FACT THAT THE ENEMY, IN SPITE OF THE MAGNITUDE OF HIS RECENT LOSSES, HAS A POTENTIAL CAPABILITY TO MOUNT FURTHER HEAVY ATTACKS OVER A WIDESPREAD AREA. HE ALSO HAS OPTIONS OPEN TO HIM AND IN GIAP, HE IS OBVIOUSLY LED BY A RESOURCEFUL AND SKILLFUL INDIVIDUAL, POSSESSED OF HIGH INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY; AND WHO CAN BE EXPECTED TO USE THESE ATTAINMENTS TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT. WE MUST, THEREFORE, TRY TO ESTIMATE WHAT THE MAJOR THEMES OF THESE OPTIONS

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 22096 ~~TOP SECRET~~
ARE, BUT ALSO WHAT VARIATIONS ON THE THEMES HE MAY EMPLOY. HE MAY, FOR EXAMPLE, ELECT, AS THIEU BELIEVES HE WILL, TO GO ALL OUT DURING THIS SUMMER IN A THREE-PRONGED OFFENSIVE PUTTING HEAVY PRESSURE ON US IN I CORPS AND THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS, ATTEMPTING TO HARASS AND INFILTRATE THE CITIES, AND TO SECURE AND HOLD AS MUCH REAL ESTATE AS POSSIBLE WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF GETTING TO NEGOTIATIONS IN THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE POSTURE. HE MAY ON THE OTHER HAND CALCULATE THAT THE RISKS IN THIS COURSE ARE TOO GREAT AND DECIDE TO SWITCH TO A PROLONGED WAR, HOPING TO WEAR DOWN OUR PATIENCE. IN THIS HE MIGHT HAVE ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE CHINESE WHO MIGHT OFFER TO INCREASE MATERIALLY THE SUPPLY OF "VOLUNTEERS" TO REPLACE NORTH VIETNAMESE MANPOWER FOR MAINTENANCE AND LOGISTICAL FUNCTIONS. HE MAY EMPLOY VARIATIONS OR COMBINATIONS OF THESE TWO THEMES. MY POINTS IS THAT WE, TOGETHER WITH THE VIETNAMESE AND WITH OUR FREE

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-2- SAIGON 22096 MAR 14

WORLD ALLIES, MUST HAVE BOTH THE PATIENCE AND THE RESOURCES TO COPE WITH WHATEVER STRATEGY OR TACTICS THE ENEMY MAY PURSUE.

3. SINCE THE ENEMY'S ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE IS POLITICAL, I.E., A TAKEOVER POLITICALLY OF SOUTH VIET-NAM, IT SEEMS TO ME IMPORTANT THAT WE SHOULD HAVE RECOURSE NOT ONLY TO OUR BEST MILITARY STRATEGISTS, BUT ALSO THOSE MOST EXPERIENCED AND

PAGE 3 RUMJIR 22096 ~~TOP SECRET~~
KNOWLEDGEABLE IN VIETNAMESE POLITICAL AND MILITARY HISTORY AND THINKING TO ANALYZE IN DEPTH THE PROBLEMS WE ARE LIKELY TO CONFRONT.

4. IF, FOR EXAMPLE, THE ENEMY LAUNCHES ANOTHER MAJOR OFFENSIVE WITHIN THE PRESENT FRAMEWORK OF HIS RESOURCES, I CONSIDER THAT WITH THE MODEST INCREASES WHICH GENERAL WESTMORELAND HAS ASKED FOR INITIALLY AND WITH THE SPEEDING UP OF VIETNAMESE MOBILIZATION, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO DENY THE ENEMY HIS MAJOR MILITARY OBJECTIVES AS DECISIVELY AS WE HAVE IN THE TET OFFENSIVE. LET US SUPPOSE, HOWEVER, THAT HE MAY HAVE SOME SUBSTANTIAL ISOLATED SUCCESS WHICH, THOUGH FROM OUR VIEWPOINT NOT DECISIVE, HE PROCLAIMED AS SUCH AND ANNOUNCED HIS WILLINGNESS TO GO TO NEGOTIATIONS. WHAT WOULD OUR POSITION BE THEN?

5. OR IF HE SHOULD TURN TO A PROLONGED WAR, ARE WE GOING TO PERMIT HIM TO USE THE SANCTUARIES OF LAOS AND CAMBODIA AS HE IS DOING NOW WITHOUT TAKING MORE EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO CHOK OFF THIS INFILTRATION? ARE WE GOING TO CONTINUE TO PERMIT SOME OF THE SIGNATORIES TO THE 1962 AGREEMENTS TO CONTINUE TO IGNORE THESE AGREEMENTS AND ENGAGE IN WHAT BILL SULLIVAN HAS REFERRED TO AS BLACKMAIL IN LAOS, AT THE SAME TIME SUPPLYING THE ENEMY WITH THE MOST SOPHISTICATED

PAGE 4 RUMJIR 22096 ~~TOP SECRET~~
WEAPONS; OR CAN WE TAKE THE RISK OF MORE EFFECTIVE MEASURES WHICH WOULD IN MY VIEW MAKE THE PROBLEM IN SOUTH VIET-NAM INFINITELY MORE MANAGEABLE? THESE ARE SOME OF THE THINGS TO WHICH I THINK WE SHOULD ADDRESS OURSELVES WHILE, AT THE SAME TIME, WE ARE CARRYING ON STUDIES OF WHAT WOULD BE FOR US SATISFACTORY TERMS OF A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT.

6. I CAN UNDERSTAND THE FAR REACHING EFFECTS ON THE BUDGET AND ON OTHER URGENT NATIONAL NEEDS THAT THE PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL TROOPS WILL ENTAIL, AND THAT THIS WILL TEST THE WILL OF OUR PEOPLE TO STAY THE COURSE. I REALIZE ALSO THAT THE DEBATE WILL FOCUS CRITICAL ATTENTION ON THE PERFORMANCE, MILITARY AND CIVILIAN, OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE, AND THAT, DUE IN PART TO MUCH SUBJECTIVE AND OFTEN INACCURATE AND INCOMPLETE REPORTING ON THE PART OF OUR PRESS HERE, THIS WILL BE AN

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EXTREMELY DIFFICULT PROBLEM TO HANDLE. NEVERTHELESS, I THINK THAT THE ESSENTIAL THING IS TO BE SUFFICIENTLY EQUIPPED AND FLEXIBLE OURSELVES, TO BACK UP THE VIETNAMESE CAPABILITIES AND OFFSET WEAKNESSES WHERE THEY EXIST IN ORDER TO DENY THE ENEMY THE MILITARY ADVANTAGE AND CONTROL HE SEEKS. WHAT WESTMORELAND IS ASKING FOR IN THE NEAR TERM ESSENTIALLY COMES TO 7 MORE COMBAT BATTALIONS AND ONE MP BATTALION, WHICH HE FEELS WILL GIVE HIM THE ADDED MANEUVERABILITY

PAGE 5 RUMJIR 22096 ~~TOP SECRET~~

HE NEEDS. IF A WAY CAN BE FOUND TO DO THIS, I BELIEVE WE MUST ACCEPT HIS JUDGMENT THAT IT IS HIGHLY IMPORTANT THAT WE DO SO. AT THE SAME TIME, I THINK IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE SHOULD SO EQUIP THE VIETNAMESE FORCES THAT THEY ARE NOT OUTGUNNED BY THE ENEMY. IT IS HARDLY REASONABLE TO EXPECT SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE AND MORALE IN FORCES WHICH GO INTO BATTLE KNOWING THEY ARE OUTGUNNED; BUT THE VIETNAMESE ARE GOING AHEAD WITH THEIR MOBILIZATION AND SHOWING A DETERMINATION TO DO THEIR SHARE OF THE JOB. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THIS FACT, PLUS THE EXCELLENT PERFORMANCE THEY TURNED IN IN THE TET OFFENSIVE, SHOULD HELP TO RELIEVE THE PRESSURE SOMEWHAT.

7. I DO NOT BELIEVE THE ADDITION OF THESE RELATIVELY MODEST FORCES, IN ITSELF, NEED HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT UPON THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE EFFORT PROVIDED, AS I SAID IN SAIGON 21733, THE EQUIPMENT AND OTHER SUPPORT NEEDED TO ALLOW THE GVN TO INCREASE ITS MILITARY EFFORT IS SUPPLIED PROMPTLY. I HAVE COMMENTED ON THIS IN GREATER DETAIL IN THE PRIOR MESSAGE.

8. I ALSO BELIEVE OUR ADDITIONAL INPUTS CAN BE REGULATED IN A WAY TO IMPROVE GVN PERFORMANCE, ALTHOUGH EXERCISE OF SUCH LEVERAGE HAS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE LIMITATIONS OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES WITH WHICH WE HAVE TO WORK, THE FRAGMENTED NATURE OF VIETNAMESE SOCIETY, WHICH NO "FRONT", NO MATTER

PAGE 6 RUMJIR 22096 ~~TOP SECRET~~

HOW PLAUSIBLE OR COMFORTING TO US, CAN QUICKLY OVERCOME, AND THE FACT THAT THEY ARE HAVING TO GET USED TO A GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM WITH WHICH THEY HAVE HAD LITTLE EXPERIENCE.

9. I REALIZE THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEMS WITH WHICH YOU ARE FACED AND WISH I COULD BE MORE HELPFUL, BUT THESE ARE SOME ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS I FELT MIGHT BE WORTH YOUR CONSIDERATION.

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