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INFORMATION

~~TOP SECRET~~

Wednesday, March 27, 1968
4:35 p.m.

Pres file

Mr. President:

Herewith Amb. Lodge clarifies
and submits the text of his views on
Vietnam.

W. W. Rostow

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)
White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1985
By rg, NARA, Date 4-19-92





DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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March 27, 1968

~~TOP SECRET - NODIS~~

Dear Mr. President:

In the hope that it will be helpful, I enclose a copy of the statement which I made in the Cabinet room yesterday afternoon.

I am as strongly opposed to "disengagement" as I have ever been -- and this is total. But, as the paper tries to indicate, I favor a different emphasis in the use of U. S. power with less stress on the "war of attrition" and more stress on organizing South Vietnamese society so that it becomes truly competitive with North Viet-Nam society.

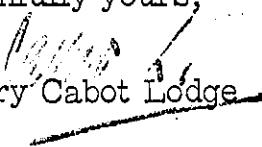
I do not even, as was alleged by Bob Murphy, favor abandonment of "search and destroy" raids since there may be occasions when such raids will be advisable in order to protect the population which we will be seeking to organize.

It is organization of the population (with ferreting out of the hard core terrorists as its prime feature) and not of the "war of attrition" which, under the terms of my proposal, would be the main effort.

I hope you feel, as I do, that real progress was made yesterday in bringing our strategy up to date with all the latest realities. It is something which must be done in all wars.

With warm and respectful regard,

Faithfully yours,


Henry Cabot Lodge

The President of the United States
The White House

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~~DECLASSIFIED~~PROPOSAL BY H. C. LODGE
March 26, 1968Authority, State Dec 5/1/74
copy 14, NARA, Date 4-3-92

I believe that urgent consideration be given to a shift of emphasis away from "search and destroy" and the "war of attrition," in which a purely military victory appears to be, I believe, the unattainable goal, towards a strategy of using military power as a shield behind which South Vietnamese society would be organized as effectively as North Vietnamese society is organized. This last would be done by intensive and repeated scourings--that is "comb-out" by police-type methods, precinct by precinct, block by block, house by house and farm by farm, much as was done by General Massu in Algiers and which is set forth in David Galula's book "Counter Insurgency Warfare."

Less stress on "search and destroy" would mean fewer casualties (U.S. and Vietnamese), less destruction, fewer refugees, less ill will, and more public support at home.

More stress on organization of South Vietnamese society would make South Vietnamese truly competitive with Communism--not just on the conventional battlefield, but in every aspect of life. For a precinct to be thus thoroughly organized would be a durable accomplishment, however limited in scope. It would end the "safe haven" for the infiltrator in that precinct. It would be putting first things first--putting the egg in the cake before putting on the frosting.

Such a goal in effect admits that a quick solution is not to be expected.

If we had focused our past effort on population organization rather than on search and destroy, we would, I believe, undoubtedly have been less badly hurt by the Tet raids.

U.S. force increases, therefore, should be in numbers sufficient only to enable us to keep faith with our troops in exposed position, as in Khe Sanh, and not to continue the past emphasis on "search and destroy."