

INFORMATION

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Friday, May 10, 1968 -- 11:00 a.m.

Mr. President:

Pres. file

Attached (Tab A) is an important Bunker cable.

It presents:

- his analysis of the enemy's intentions;
- our own basic strength;
- his strong recommendations for a change in Harriman's instructions on the conditions under which a total bombing cessation should be accepted (para. 11 at paper clip).

At Tab B is a MACV analysis of infiltration covered by an interesting Bob Ginsburgh memo which suggests the possible timing of Hanoi's negotiating strategy in relation to infiltration.

W. W. Rostow

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By us, date 6-25-84

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Cy to George Christian

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC
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Date: <i>11 July 1968</i>	

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SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 26928

NODIS/CROCODILE

Document #

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PARIS FOR TODEL

1. I AM NOT WORRIED ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE FIGHTING WHICH HAS BEEN GOING ON AROUND SAIGON SINCE SATURDAY, BECAUSE THE ARVN, POLICE AND US FORCES ARE VERY SUBSTANTIAL AND WE CAN MANAGE ANYTHING WHICH THEY THROW IN, INCLUDING THEIR RESERVES. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, SOME ASPECTS OF THIS AND RELATED MATTERS ON WHICH I WANT WASHINGTON TO HAVE MY VIEWS.
2. THE VC MAIN STRATEGY MANIFESTS ITSELF IN SEVERAL WAYS, TWO OF WHICH ARE ASSASSINATION AND SABOTAGE. ASSASSINATION IS CONCENTRATED ON POLICE OUTPOSTS, AND SABOTAGE AT PUBLIC UTILITIES. ONE POWER STATION IS ALREADY OUT OF ACTION AS RESULT OF SABOTAGE, AND TWO WERE DAMAGED BY SHELLING. A PRE-OFFENSIVE ATTACK, WAS DIRECTED AGAINST VIETNAMESE TV STATION AND FAILED, BUT COULD BE ATTEMPTED AGAIN. FURTHER SABOTAGE EFFORTS MUST BE EXPECTED ON OTHER POWER STATIONS, THE WATER WORKS, POST OFFICE, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, ETC. THIS IS WELL UNDERSTOOD HERE AND I AM ASSURED THAT EVERY EFFORT IS BEING MADE TO GIVE ALL PRACTICAL PROTECTION, ESPECIALLY TO KEY POWER AND WATER INSTALLATIONS, BUT THIS DOES NOT PRECLUDE FURTHER INDIVIDUAL SUCCESSES BY THE VC.
3. A BY PRODUCT OF THE FIGHTING HAS BEEN SOME THOUSANDS OF TEMPORARY EVACUEES, WHO HAVE FLED FROM THE FIGHTING AREAS, SOME OF WHOM WILL HAVE LOST THEIR HOMES AND WILL NEED TO BE PROVIDED FOR. THE HOSPITALS ARE NOW FULL OF WOUNDED. THERE IS A REDUCTION IN VEGETABLE AND MEAT SUPPLIES INTO THE CITY, ALTHOUGH SOME SUPPLIES ARE COMING THROUGH FROM THE NORTHEAST. RICE IS AMPLE.
4. THE AIM--OR AT LEAST ONE AIM--OF ALL THIS IS PRETTY CLEAR: TO

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-2- SAIGON 26928/1, May 10, 1968

NODIS/CROCODILE

PRODUCE AS MUCH TERROR AND HAVOC IN THE CITY FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, IN ORDER TO CAUSE AS MUCH TROUBLE AS POSSIBLE TO THE AUTHORITIES AND THE PEOPLE, WITH THE HOPE OF OVERWHELMING AND COLLAPSING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CITY SERVICES, PRODUCING MASS DISCONTENT AND HOPEFULLY THE UPRISING WHICH THEY FAILED TO ACHIEVE IN THE TET OFFENSIVE. THERE IS NO SIGN OF PANIC OR SUCH COLLAPSE, AND OUR MILITARY AND THE VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES ARE VERY CONFIDENT THAT THEY ARE GOING TO BRING THIS UNDER CONTROL BEFORE IT REACHES THAT STAGE.

5. THAT THEY HAVE OTHER AIMS IN MIND IS OBVIOUS, SUCH AS INFLUENCING THE PARIS TALKS, IMPRESSING AMERICAN AND WORLD OPINION WITH THEIR CONTINUED ABILITY TO MOUNT SUBSTANTIAL CAMPAIGNS IN ORDER TO CAUSE MORE DESPAIR IN THE AMERICAN PUBLIC, ETC. WHAT EMERGES IS THAT THEY ARE MAKING ANOTHER GREAT EFFORT, NOT ON THE SCALE OF TET BUT STILL IMPRESSIVE, AND THEY HAVE THE CAPABILITY OF KEEPING THIS GOING HERE FOR SOME DAYS AND POSSIBLY WEEKS. IF THEY BREAK OFF THIS ATTACK IT WILL BE TO RESUPPLY, THEN START AGAIN SOME WEEKS HENCE, ALTHOUGH PERHAPS ON A REDUCED SCALE IN VIEW OF THEIR INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT RESUPPLY PROBLEMS DURING THE MONSOON SEASON IN LAOS. THEY ARE IN ANY CASE WILLING TO PAY A VERY HEAVY PRICE IN TERMS OF LOSSES.

6. ALONG WITH THIS THERE HAS BEEN AN EXTRAORDINARY MOVEMENT SOUTH AND INFILTRATION, IN THE LAST FOUR MONTHS, AND THIS CONTINUES. (HOWEVER, OUR SUCCESS AT KHE SANH, THE A SHAU VALLEY CAMPAIGN WITH ITS CAPTURE OF HUGE SUPPLIES, AND OUR SPOILING OPERATIONS IN APRIL, ALSO WITH CAPTURE OF HEAVY SUPPLIES, HAVE INFLICTED GREAT LOSSES ON THE ENEMY'S MANPOWER AND SUPPLIES.) HANOI AND NLF BROADCASTS HAVE CALLED FOR THE BOMBING OF THE PALACE AND AMERICAN EMBASSY BY VNAF DEFECTORS, AND A MASS UPRISING. WE MUST EXPECT THAT ONE OR MORE OF OUR INSTALLATIONS IN AND AROUND SAIGON WILL BE SINGLED OUT AT ANY TIME OVER THE NEXT DAYS OR WEEKS FOR SPECIAL SABOTAGE, WITH A POSSIBILITY OF MORE CASUALTIES TO AMERICANS.

7. THERE IS SOME INTERESTING EVIDENCE OF WHAT IS GOING ON ON THE ENEMY'S SIDE. IN I CORPS JUST NORTH OF HUE ON MAY 1, 102 NVA TROOPS SURRENDERED, THE LARGEST SINGLE BATCH IN THIS WAR, INDUCED BY THE AMPLIFIER BROADCASTS OF A CAPTURED SERGEANT, THE HIGHEST LEVEL DEFECTOR OF THIS WAR.

[] DEFECTED ON APRIL 19 AND REVEALED THE PLANS AND TIMING OF THE PRESENT OFFENSIVE. THIS INFORMATION WAS USED IN OUR PREPARATIONS FOR THE ATTACK ON SAIGON, AND HAS PROVEN SUBSTANTIALLY CORRECT. ON MAY 8 ANOTHER [] DEFECTED NEAR SAIGON ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE POLITICAL COMMISSARS WERE ASKING THE IMPOSSIBLE IN MILITARY TERMS AND HE COULD NOT TAKE IT ANY MORE. HE AND OTHERS HAVE ADDED THAT MORALE IS NOT AS GOOD AS IT WAS, AND THERE IS WANING

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CONFIDENCE IN THE RANKS NOW THAT THE VC CAN WIN. THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT REPLACEMENTS FROM THE NORTH AND IMPRESSED SOUTHERNERS ARE BEING THROWN INTO BATTLE WITH LITTLE MILITARY TRAINING. THERE IS ALSO SOME EVIDENCE THAT HANOI WAS MOVING TOWARD A BID FOR TALKS EVEN BEFORE THE APRIL 30 SPEECH AND THAT THEY ARE ANXIOUS TO CONTINUE THE TALKS.

8. IT IS MY VIEW THAT HANOI AND THE NLF ARE HURTING, ARE NOW ENGAGED IN A HUGE GAMBLE, AND THIS IS A YEAR OF CLIMAX. THEY, PERHAPS, STILL HOPE FOR A COLLAPSE IN SAIGON. I FEEL CERTAIN THEY WILL FAIL. PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT IN TERMS OF THEIR GAMBLE IS THAT THEY NOW HOPE TO WIN BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY REGARD AS OUR DESPERATE DESIRE FOR PEACE. THE SPEECHES OF MCCARTHY, KENNEDY, GALBRAITH AND OTHERS, ARTICLES IN THE US PRESS AND TV, THE SHIFT IN NEWSWEEK, WALTER CRONKITE AND OTHERS, MAY HAVE CONVINCED THEM THAT IF THEY NEGOTIATE AND FIGHT WE WILL BE READY TO THROW IN THE SPONGE BY FORCING A COALITION ON THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE.

9. THE ARROGANCE OF THEIR MAY 3 REPLY - TO ARRANGE FOR THE COMPLETE CESSATION OF BOMBING AND OTHER ACTS OF WAR - WAS PART PROPAGANDA AND PART BRAVADO. ALL THE EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THEY ARE GOING TO BE TOUGH IN THE NEGOTIATIONS AND ARE OUT TO OBTAIN THE COLOSSAL CONCESSION OF COALITION GOVERNMENT. THEY, OR AT LEAST SOME IN THE NORTH, MUST BE ARGUING THAT THE UNITED STATES REGARDS ITS BARGAINING POSITION AS WEAK, AND THEREFORE THAT THEY ARE IN A STRONG POSITION. UNLESS WE ACT WITH GENUINE CONFIDENCE IN THE STRENGTH OF OUR BARGAINING POSITION, I AM FEARFUL OF THE OUTCOME. BUNKER
BT

PASSED PARIS 10 May 1968

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PARIS FOR TODEL

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1968 MAY 10 AM 6:09

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10. WASHINGTON KNOWS MY POSITION AS A RESULT OF MY VISIT. I THINK WE ARE IN A VERY STRONG POSITION TO NEGOTIATE, AND THAT IT IS HANOI WHICH IS WORRIED, OR AT LEAST SOME IN HANOI ARE WORRIED, FOR I SUSPECT THEY HAVE THEIR HAWKS AND DOVES JUST AS WE DO.

11. THE CONCLUSIONS I DRAW FROM ALL THE FOREGOING ARE CLEAR:

A. HARRIMAN'S ORDERS TO AGREE TO A FULL CESSATION OF BOMBING IN THE NORTH SHOULD BE AMENDED.

B. WE SHOULD DEMAND AS A CONDITION OF FULL CESSATION A SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTION IN THE UNPRECEDENTED NVN MOVEMENT SOUTH, WHICH WE ARE IN A POSITION TO OBSERVE.

C. WE SHOULD DEMAND A REDUCTION NOW IN THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE IN THE SOUTH.

D. MOST IMPORTANT, WE SHOULD UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES AGREE TO A FULL CESSATION OF BOMBING IN THE NORTH, WHILE SAIGON IS UNDER HARRASSMENT AND ATTACK. I CAN THINK OF NOTHING MORE CALCULATED TO CAUSE DESPAIR HERE THAN TO AGREE UNDER THESE CONDITIONS. THE SUSPICION IN THE SOUTH AS TO OUR NEGOTIATING INTENTIONS IS THAT WE ARE READY TO GO VERY FAR, EVEN TO COALITION WITH THE NLF OR ITS NEW ALLIANCE, TO STOP THE WAR. IF WE CEASE OUR BOMBING OF THE NORTH WHILE SAIGON IS UNDER ATTACK, THIS SUSPICION WOULD ENORMOUSLY INCREASE AND COULD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE IN TERMS OF MAINTAINING MORALE AND UNITY HERE. THIEU IS EXPECTED TO ESTABLISH A NEW AND BROADER GOVERNMENT SHORTLY AND WE MUST NOT HANDICAP IT AT THE OUTSET. A FULL CESSATION OF BOMBING UNDER

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-2- SAIGON 26928, MAY 10 (SECTION TWO OF TWO)

HARRIMAN'S PRESENT INSTRUCTIONS WOULD ENCOURAGE THE HARD LINERS IN HANOI TO THINK WE ARE READY TO CALL IT QUITS, AND IN THE DEBATES WHICH MUST BE TAKING PLACE IN THE NORTH THEY WOULD BE JUSTIFIED IN THEIR VIEW THAT THE THING TO DO IS TO KEEP THE PRESSURE ON SAIGON.

E. I MYSELF WOULD GO FURTHER, AND EVEN WHILE THE TALKS PROCEED I WOULD BOMB POWER STATIONS, RAILWAY YARDS, AND MILITARY INSTALLATIONS NEAR AND IN THE CITIES BELOW THE 20TH PARALLEL, ADDING TO THEIR TROUBLES IN THE NORTH, CREATING MORE REFUGEE PROBLEMS FOR THEM, AND PUTTING NEW STRAINS ON THEIR FACILITIES.

F. IN SHORT, UNTIL THEY REDUCE THE MOVEMENTS SOUTH AND CALL OFF THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST SAIGON, WE SHOULD NOT AGREE TO A FULL CESSATION, AND AT SOME STAGE WE SHOULD LET HANOI KNOW WHY. AS A FOOTNOTE, WE WOULD LOOK RIDICULOUS IF WE AGREED TO A FULL CESSATION, AND A FEW DAYS LATER HAD ONE OF OUR AMERICAN INSTALLATIONS BLASTED BY SABOTAGE WITH HEAVY AMERICAN CASUALTIES. BUNKER
BT

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ROSTOW

Document # 67

Attached is MACV's analysis of infiltration activity as of 4 May. Note that this represents only the first result of a continuing analysis.

Significant conclusions:

- Through March 1968, NVN maintained a normal rate of infiltration of 6,000 - 8,000 a month. (Presumably this does not include the 304th and 320th Divisions.)

- Since 1 March, an additional 55,500 - 65,000 have started south. Estimated destinations:

MR-5	13,500 - 17,000	(II Corps)
COSVN	18,000	(Saigon + Delta)
B-3 Front	6,500 - 10,000	(Western Highlands)
DMZ/MR Tri Thien	17,500 - 20,000	(I Corps)
	55,500 - 65,000	

- Infiltrators move at an average rate of 11 kilometers per day.

- 14,900 are probably now south of the DMZ with 41,800 still in NVN. The last of these could be at the DMZ by about 15 June.

- Estimated dates for closure at destinations:

DMZ/Tri Thien/Hue	-- early June
MR-5	-- late July
B-3	-- late June
COSVN - III Corps	-- early August
COSVN-Phuoc Long Province	-- late August

- At the indicated rate of about 13,000 per month, the enemy for the first time in 18 months will be able to sustain a personnel input adequate to cover his losses. *

* Not at present casualty rates - if they are sustained.

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- Country-wide, enemy personnel should peak in July.

By the end of June, however, he will have met most of his requirements north of III Corps. Thus, he should have an earlier capability to mount a threat in I Corps and the Highlands.

I would make the observation that if the enemy is interested in serious negotiations, he might have the following fight-talk strategy in mind:

- In return for a cessation of bombing of all NVN, about mid-June he might agree to (a) cease further infiltration and (b) respect the DMZ.

- Sometime in June he might launch a major offensive designed to (a) create as much chaos as possible in the cities and (b) expand to the maximum areas under his control.

- Engage in a concerted diplomatic-propaganda effort to achieve by early August a cease-fire in SVN, which would exploit to the maximum the gains achieved by his military offensive.

We have no convincing evidence that this is, in fact, his strategy. But such moves have sufficient logic for us to recognize that this is one possible strategy.

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ROBERT N. GINSBURGH

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