

JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM
IDENTIFICATION FORM

AGENCY INFORMATION

AGENCY : JCS
RECORD NUMBER : 202-10002-10054
RECORDS SERIES : TAYLOR PAPERS
AGENCY FILE NUMBER :

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

ORIGINATOR : OSD
FROM :
TO :
TITLE : VISIT TO VIETNAM - 7-10 SEPTEMBER 1963
DATE : 00/00/63
PAGES : 39
SUBJECTS : VISIT TO VIETNAM

VIETNAM, U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE

DIEM GOVERNMENT

DOCUMENT TYPE : PAPER, TEXTUAL DOCUMENT
CLASSIFICATION : UNCLASSIFIED
RESTRICTIONS : OPEN IN FULL
CURRENT STATUS : OPEN
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 07/21/97
OPENING CRITERIA :
COMMENTS : Taylor Papers, Box 12. Report of mission to South
Vietnam to assess situation in various Corps areas.

357

JFK Copy 202-10002-10054

Declassification Review/Postponement Form

Originator: Multi OSD?

Date: _____

Subject: Visit to Vietnam 7-10 September 1963

Original Level of Classification: _____

Third Agency Equities: NO OBJECTION
OSD State

Remarks: _____

Page # of Postponement

Reason for Postponement IAW Section 6 of JFK Act

Taylor Box 12

11 of 21

358

The Department of State has no objection to the release or declassification of this document in full under the provisions of the JFK Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 (PL 102-526).

Reviewed on 7/21 - J. Boyle

TOP SECRET

DECLASSIFIED BY [REDACTED] STAFF
DATE JUL 21 1997

VISIT TO VIETNAM
7 - 10 SEPTEMBER 1963

359

DOWNGRADED AT 12 YEAR
INTERVALS; NOT AUTOMATICALLY
DECLASSIFIED. DOD DIR 5200.10

TOP SECRET

U.S. MILITARY ADVISOR INTERVIEWS

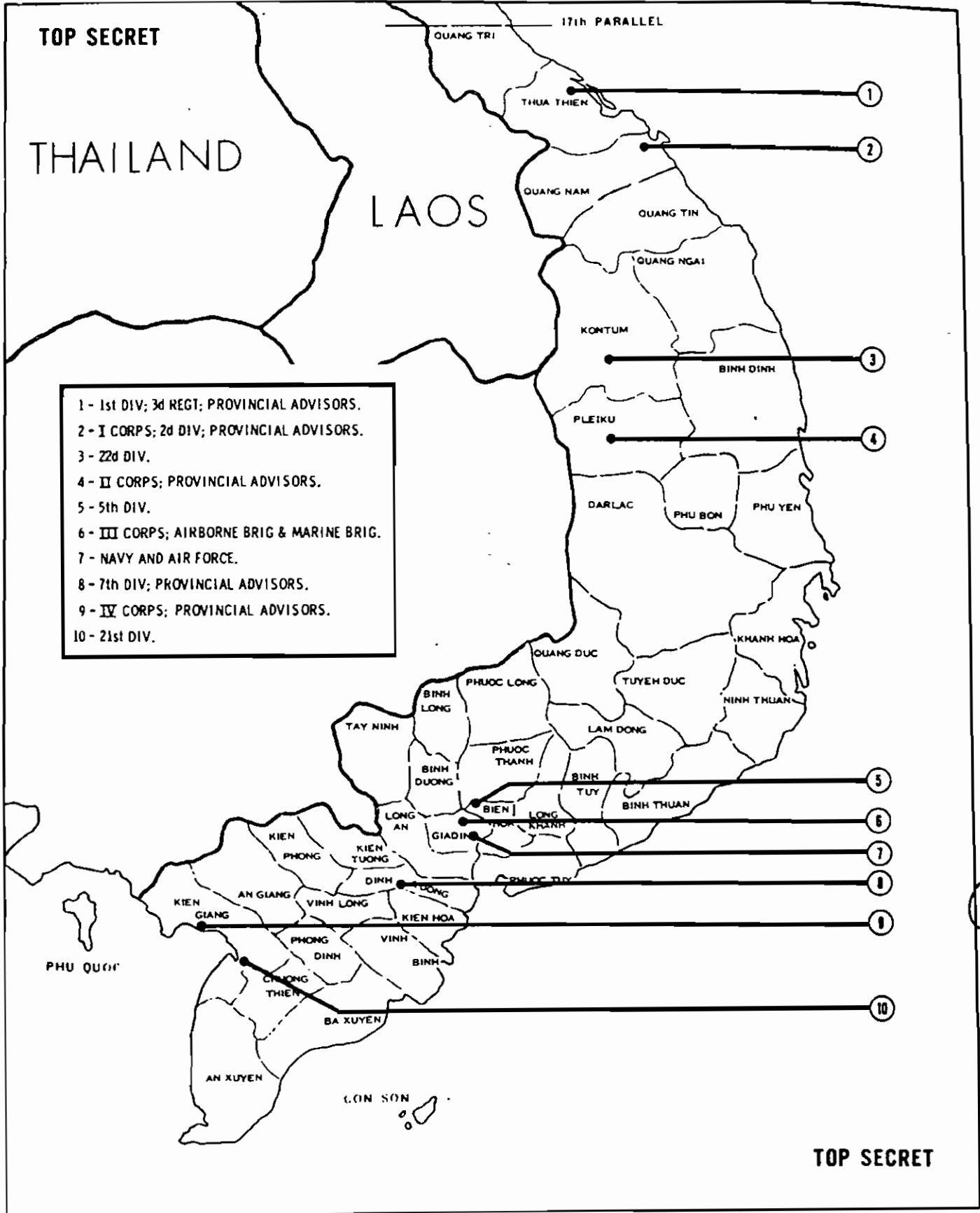
TOP SECRET

THAILAND

LAOS

17th PARALLEL

- 1 - 1st DIV; 3d REGT; PROVINCIAL ADVISORS.
- 2 - I CORPS; 2d DIV; PROVINCIAL ADVISORS.
- 3 - 22d DIV.
- 4 - II CORPS; PROVINCIAL ADVISORS.
- 5 - 5th DIV.
- 6 - III CORPS; AIRBORNE BRIG & MARINE BRIG.
- 7 - NAVY AND AIR FORCE.
- 8 - 7th DIV; PROVINCIAL ADVISORS.
- 9 - IV CORPS; PROVINCIAL ADVISORS.
- 10 - 21st DIV.



360

TOP SECRET

Visit to Vietnam

6 - 10 September 1963

The trip developed from a White House meeting on 6 September, when it was concluded that among the factors required to support basic policy decisions is a knowledge of the effect of recent events upon the attitudes of the Vietnamese in general, and upon the war effort against the Viet Cong.

One means of acquiring this knowledge is through the day-to-day observations of U.S. military advisors. It was the purpose of the trip to obtain a first-hand sampling of the observations of U.S. military personnel who are in contact with the working Vietnamese military.

The horizons of the average U.S. advisor, except for those very near the top, are limited. Their attention, and thus their direct knowledge, are confined largely to the Vietnamese unit with whose fortunes they are identified. In terms of what they actually see, hear and interpret daily in this environment, their views have strong credibility. To the extent possible, this report derives from discussion oriented upon such matters of fact or of direct observation.

All Corps were visited. Substantive conversations were held with 87 members of the advisory system, from enlisted men of relatively low rank to senior officers. They included advisors to commanders and staff officers at levels from corps to company, and advisors to province chiefs. Most conversations were held in the individual's daily surroundings, either in the headquarters or in the field during operations.

Occasionally, in the interest of saving time, several advisors were assembled in a single place. The map facing page 1 shows the places visited.

There is no way of knowing how many Vietnamese officer views are reflected in these 87 interviews. Certainly, the number is great, and the sampling thus has a reasonably broad base.

The principal effort was addressed to procuring views of the advisors on:

The progress of the war; changes in the past few weeks; prospects for the future.

Relations with their Vietnamese counterparts; changes since the emergence of the crisis.

Attitudes of counterparts regarding the political problem, the Buddhist issue, the national leadership and pursuit of the war.

Attitudes of the Vietnamese people - observed or reported by counterparts - regarding the critical points mentioned above.

Complementary to the above, discussions were held with the Ambassador, General Harkins and his staff, as well as with 22 Vietnamese officers, whose views were sought on the critical issues, wherever it was practicable to do so.

As a supplement to all the foregoing, key advisors were asked, through General Harkins, to put their views in writing. They will be found at Tab A.

- - - - -

General conclusions reached were these:

The shooting war is still going ahead at an impressive pace. It has been affected adversely by the political crisis, but the impact is not great.

There is a lot of war left to fight, particularly in the Delta, where the Viet Cong remain strong.

Vietnamese officers of all ranks are well aware of the Buddhist issue. Most have viewed it in detachment and have not permitted religious differences significantly to affect their internal military relationship.

362

TOP SECRET

Vietnamese military commanders, at the various echelons, are obedient and could be expected to execute any order they view as lawful.

The U.S./Vietnamese military relationship has not been damaged by the political crisis, in any significant degree.

There is some dissatisfaction, among Vietnamese officers, with the national administration. It is focused far more on Ngo Dinh Nhu than on President Diem. Nhu's departure would be hailed, but few officers would extend their necks to bring it about.

Excluding the very serious political and military factors external to Vietnam, the Viet Cong war will be won if the current U.S. military and sociological programs are pursued, irrespective of the grave defects in the ruling regime.

Improvements in the quality of the Vietnamese Government are not going to be brought about by leverage applied through the military. They do not have much, and will probably not use what they have.

Field Visits

1. IV Corps.

Thirty-five U.S. military persons were interviewed, varying in rank from colonel to sergeant. They were cheerful, enthusiastic and readily prepared to discuss the key subjects. Obviously, they had been thinking about them.

a. Specifics:

(1) 33 of the 35 asserted that their advisory relationships had not been changed in any way by the political crisis.

(2) All 35 were enthusiastic about the progress of the war and were emphatic that their counterparts were laboring at the war and not at politics.

TOP SECRET

363

(3) The Corps Advisor asserted that he was certain the Corps Commander had been ordered to intensify operations against the Viet Cong.

(4) 10 of the 35 had had limited discussion of political subjects with their counterpart; 3 had gone into the matter deeply.

(5) 2 stated that their advisory relationship had degraded; one whose counterpart asserted that there are too many Americans in Vietnam, and another who detected an unwillingness to pass on combat intelligence.

(6) One of the 35 reported hearing unfavorable comments regarding the Saigon Government - addressed to Ngo Dinh Nhu and his wife.

(7) None had discussed coup rumors with their counterparts.

(8) 4 of the 35 reported hearing apprehensive comments regarding possible suspension of U.S. aid.

b. In addition to the discussions with advisors, conversations were held with 9 Vietnamese officers, from major general to captain. It was not easy to break the ice with them on the sensitive issues. It was evident, however, that they were genuinely intent on their combatant activities, so much so as to give the impression that they could have little time left for plotting and politicking.

c. Specifics:

(1) General Cao, the IV Corps Commander, was willing to talk about martial law or Buddhists, but not politics. He stated that there was no martial law in his Corps area (this was confirmed separately by both divisions); that there had never been any curfew restrictions (likewise confirmed); that imposition of curfew would halt Saigon's fish supply.

10/1/54

Dear Mr. [Name]

of the [Name],
[Address]
[City, State, Zip]

Re: [Subject]

[Text]

[Text]

[Text]

[Text]

[Text]

[Text]

[Text]

[Text]

[Text]

[Text]

[Text]

365

and there is indication that the unfavorable pre-occupation is diminishing. As would be expected, attention to Saigon diminishes rapidly as the distance from the Capital increases.

b. Advisor/counterpart relations have not degraded. There is a general reluctance to discuss politics - apparently deriving from an official Corps order. Such discussions as have been possible between advisors and their counterparts have suggested loyalty - or obedience - to the Government, concern over the need quickly to settle the Buddhist crisis and to defeat the Viet Cong. There is an undercurrent of antipathy for Mr. Nhu.

c. Specifics

Fourteen officers and one enlisted advisor were interviewed. Reactions were as follows:

(1) The Corps advisor, a two-year Vietnam veteran and a confidant of General Dinh, states that Dinh is firmly locked to the Palace, and has Diem's confidence; is surfeited with power and will keep his Corps - and Corps area - oriented toward the Government. He is generally respected by his officers. He stated that, of 10 Vietnamese officers who were willing to discuss politics with him, only one was deeply worried about the Buddhist problem, three were vocally anti-Nhu, expressing hope that the U.S. will exert pressure to diminish Nhu's power with Diem, whom they respect.

He stated that neither martial law nor curfew has had any significant impact on the civilians and military in the provinces, that civilians in the provinces are largely apathetic to the problem, and expressed confidence that offensive operations - impeded initially in the area near Saigon - would begin to accelerate.

(2) Of the 13 other personnel interviewed, all agreed that the attention of the 5th Division (only 20 miles from Saigon) is directed mainly at the security of the city. Only three

battalions of the division are now fighting the Viet Cong, although it is planned that the number will increase to six next week.

(3) Ten of the 13 volunteered that operations elsewhere had not been impeded.

(4) All but one were firm that their counterpart relations had not changed; that one asserted that he had detected a cooling attitude.

(5) Two stated that their counterparts had advised them that political discussions with Americans were forbidden.

(6) Four of the 13 stated that their counterparts had privately expressed favorable sentiments regarding Diem, unfavorable sentiments regarding Nhu and an intense desire to get forward with the war.

3. II Corps.

a. This area exhibits its geographic remoteness from Saigon in terms of continued prosecution of the war, minimal impact of curfew (0100 to 0400 in Pleiku) and continued effective relationships between the Vietnamese military and their U.S. counterparts. Nineteen advisors were consulted. It was difficult to get them to talk about anything but the war, and the progress the Vietnamese are making.

b. Specifics:

(1) The Corps Advisor reported that General Khanh, the Corps Commander, has spent much time ensuring that his military forces and his provincial authorities are fully apprised of the facts in the situation (the party line). He states that Khanh has issued orders for an intensification of all operations against the Viet Cong, aimed at driving them into the mountains, destroying their food and harrying their movements. The advisor reports that Khanh now spends more time in Saigon, is vocal in his praise of Diem; does not mention Nhu.

(2) All nineteen officers interrogated averred that their relations with their counterparts were excellent; two stated that they were closer than before the crisis.

(3) Two reported Vietnamese inquiries, following reading Newsweek, of the possibility of losing U.S. aid. One is quoted as saying, "You are our only true friends. We cannot win without you."

(4) Four advisors reported hearing younger officers speak adversely of Nhu; two were anxious, at the same time, to evince respect for Diem; one, in criticising Nhu, stated that nothing could be done. "This is our country. We have nowhere else to go and no money to go with."

(5) One advisor had been lectured by his counterpart on the heavy-handed conduct of the Government in connection with the Buddhists - with whom he had no sympathy.

(6) One advisor to a province chief stated that his counterpart was derisive of press claims of religious intolerance. The counterpart is a Montagnard (highlander) major, originally a Buddhist, converted Catholic, now a practising Episcopalian who is actually building an Episcopal mission in Pleiku with Vietnamese engineers.

(7) Seven advisors quoted their counterparts as stating that the Corps policy was to focus on fighting the Viet Cong, to get into the field more and to stay there longer.

4. I Corps.

a. The general reaction derived from the military in this area is that, except for the fury generated in Hue by the original Buddhist troubles, it is business as usual, with the Viet Cong getting the business. The war, undeniably, is going well, and 92% of the rural population is now in strategic hamlets. Both officers and enlisted men have expressed discontent with the Buddhist problem, but their rancor seems

more oriented upon Nhu and Madame Nhu than upon Diem or the Government. Twenty advisors were consulted. They represented a full cross section of the Corps area advisory contingent.

b. Specifics:

(1) All twenty told the usual story of no change in their advisory relationships. Two stated that their counterparts were even closer to them because of their intense interest in learning the significance of the world situation:

(2) The 1st Division advisor (Hue) stated that his counterpart (General Tri) had made a definite effort to accelerate operations in the past two weeks, and that this was being felt throughout the unit. He quoted his counterpart as saying that the local area could be expected to support the Diem Government, but that "nobody loves Nhu".

(3) The advisor to the 3d Regiment (Hue) quoted his counterpart as saying that the current crisis has meant little to the enlisted men or to the common people, that only the cities have been concerned, and that in those areas it is "more noise than anything else".

(4) One advisor reported a conversation with a Vietnamese officer (Buddhist) who was severely critical of the handling of the Buddhist matter in Hue.

(5) Three of the 20 interrogated were highly critical either of Nhu, or of Nhu and his wife. One said they should be chased from the country. One said that Madame Nhu at the U.N. would be a tragedy for Vietnam.

(6) None of the 20 had heard any comments regarding the question of withdrawing U.S. aid.

5. The Navy.

In a discussion with the senior advisor to the Vietnamese Navy, he disclosed the following as the expressed attitudes of Navy personnel:

369

a. The commander of the Navy is loyal to Diem, as a person and as the head of the Government. He states that he is a military man and will support any government that is constitutionally established.

b. Four key officers in the Navy are agreed that the imposition of martial law was necessary, but that the abrasive aspects which have accompanied it are the responsibility of Nhu, who ought to leave the country.

b. Junior and mid-grade officers have made no significant statements on the subject. They, in fact, have been extremely busy with their Saigon security tasks and their routine sea and river activities.

6. The Air Force.

Conference with the senior advisor to the Air Force elicited the following:

a. There are many Air Force officers who are overly attentive to politics, including the commander.

b. On balance, their comments exhibit a loyalty to the Diem Government either out of patriotism (on the part of many, sincere younger officers who are U.S. trained), or of opportunism (on the part of the more senior officers who are French trained and who enjoy their position due to the current regime).

c. The Air Force war effort has not degraded significantly since the crisis.

d. Officers have expressed the view to the senior advisor that the Viet Cong war will be won - political vibrations notwithstanding - if the U.S. continues its aid.

7. The Marines.

The senior advisor to the Marine Brigade contributed the following:

a. The entire brigade must be accounted wholly loyal to Diem. Colonel Khang, the commander, is intensely devoted to Diem and his officers will follow him without question.

b. On the night of 30 August Khang, who is on intimate terms with his advisor, confided to him that there was probably going to be a coup that night, that he would lead the counter-coup and asked the advisor to care for his family affairs (8 children) in case he did not survive.

c. The units of the brigade are either busy fighting or anxious to do so. Their attention is on the war.

8. The Senior Advisor.

The final interview was with General Harkins. He assessed the temper of the military forces in detail, and in much the same terms as were derived from the visits described in the preceding paragraphs.

He is convinced that the programs we have under way are sufficiently matured that it would be extremely difficult to put them in serious disarray.

He believes that Diem is seeking now to get the country back to what passes for normal, and is emphatic about the relatively minor effect the Buddhist repressions and the many ineptitudes of martial law have had on the country at large.

He believes that both sentiment and reality polarize strongly and properly against the Nhus; that the country could survive - and flourish - with them gone and Diem still there.

He is pursuing the military advisory role exactly as before, and is in frequent contact with the Ambassador, who obviously seeks and respects his counsel.

9. The Ambassador.

A final interview was held with the Ambassador just before departure, and following his long meeting of 9 September with President Diem. Since it has been

reported separately, his debrief will not be repeated here, beyond recounting these peripheral comments:

a. The Ambassador was impressed with the difficulty of getting Diem to contemplate the points he sought to make.

b. He felt that the greatest impact was probably made by the discussion of the grave reaction which Diem is courting in the U.S. Congress.

c. He was not sanguine concerning the success of his appeal that Nhu should depart, in the nation's interest, but is not prepared to acknowledge this as impossible to achieve.

d. Just prior to the close of the discussion he observed that the Vietnam war is, in his view, the key to our Asian position and the controlling factor in the future of SEATO and our forward posture in the Pacific. He said that we cannot afford to lose, and that he is both resolute and confident that an effective formula can be found.

373

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

-2-

We recognize the possibility that this campaign may also result in resumed coup plotting by the Generals. We propose at this stage to give no encouragement to such activity although we remain ready to listen to serious approaches.

We believe that the Phase I campaign, outlined in more detail below, has a good chance of ousting Nhu if skillfully and forcefully pressed. If it fails, we will move on to Phase II, which involves selective cutting and redirecting our aid program. Our preliminary thoughts on this are also outlined below.

395

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

PHASE I.

Purpose

The purpose of Phase I is to attempt to persuade Diem and Nhu separately that the Nhus should leave the country for an extended period. The means are continuing the Lodge-Diem conversations; direct approaches to Nhu; "carrot and stick" measures to separate the Nhus from their immediate supporters; and a carefully-tailored public posture to supplement these efforts.

Part A, Phase I, below, describes a possible Lodge approach to Diem.

Part B, below, describes the actions to be taken to isolate the Nhus from their immediate supporters, including a suggested approach to Nhu himself.

Part C, below, describes possible Congressional action to produce pressure on Viet-Nam.

Part D, below, describes the US Government public posture in Phase I, including a proposed statement.

Part E is concerned with the possible evacuation of dependents as proposed by Ambassador Lodge.

376

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

Part A, Phase I

Lodge's Approach to Diem.

Lodge should see Diem and convey the following:

The United States Government feels, as the President indicated in his TV interview, that Diem must take drastic action to recapture the support of his people, repeating the same approach made by Ambassador Lodge in his last meeting, i.e., a long vacation for the Nhus, actions to demonstrate a reversal of the policy of repression, and the broadening of the Government.

However, in the meantime, the United States Government is faced with a crisis of confidence in the Vietnamese Government on the part of the American public and more especially the American Congress. In order to preserve the aid program to South Viet-Nam, which the President sincerely desires to do, it has become politically necessary to disassociate ourselves from supporting those units responsible for the raid on the pagodas. Otherwise, the United States Congress may cut off all aid. Therefore, Ambassador Lodge must reluctantly notify President Diem that assistance to Colonel Tung's programs must be terminated. We will make an attempt to redirect what aid we can on to programs essential to the war effort if this can be worked out.

If President Diem can see fit to take the dramatic actions mentioned above promptly, we feel that we can quickly restore confidence. But we must warn the President that if the situation

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

7 situation continues as it has been we may have to make further cuts--again in order to avoid a total cut of aid. If this becomes necessary we will endeavor to make these in such a way as not to affect the war effort, e.g., the Saigon water works, the Saigon electric power plant, etc.

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

378

Part B, Phase I

1. Objective

To separate the Nhus and their immediate supporters (i. e. , Tung Hieu of the Police, Minister Ngo Trong Hieu).

2. Concept of Operations. Actions taken should fall short of seriously damaging the war effort while at the same time indicating that the U.S. will not tolerate the Nhus. The importance of these actions does not lie in physical damage done the GVN but in their psychological effect upon Nhu and company, and upon the potential opposition. These actions must demonstrate U.S. determination not to tolerate the Nhus and their attempts to destroy American prestige. For every overt action, there should be corresponding covert actions designed to split the Nhu power group and further discredit them. The entire operation should be conceived of as a psychological warfare campaign designed to maintain U.S. prestige by dissociating ourselves from the Nhus and discrediting them.

3. Specific Recommended Actions. Actions should be pinned to reportedly ominous signs that the U.S. will not tolerate the repressive actions against the Buddhists or other citizens and will not tolerate and support any persons directly responsible for such actions (i. e. the Nhus and Tung). A Congressional or Senatorial Resolution to this purpose is recommended. (See below).

(1.) Overt

a. Requirement for a Signed Statement to Accompany U.S. Aid.

Instruct all U.S. agencies promptly to answer routine requests for support on the merits, but to require a signed statement, in substance:

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

"These supplies will not be used in any way to indicate U.S. or GVN support of anti-Buddhist or other unqualified repressive actions, or of those persons connected with or directly responsible for such actions."

Comment: No violent reaction from the President is likely if it is explained to him by the Ambassador that these steps are absolutely necessary to prevent all aid from being severed. Selected instances of this requirement should be leaked to the press--alerting them to check on compliance. Instances of rejection of the requirement should be broadly publicized as evidence of unwillingness to get on with the war. This should be very effective in hastening consolidation of anti-Nhu opinion.

b. Termination of CAS Support to Vietnamese Special Forces by withdrawing CAS-owned equipment. Announce to Special Forces that henceforth no additional funds will be paid through Tung for any projects whatsoever. Other projects may be supported by payment directly to project officers, provided project is in mutual best interest. Any project capable of serving personal ambitions of Nhu or Tung automatically excluded. Actual harm done to war effort or to Special Forces would be slight but it would be a psychological blow of considerable proportions to Tung whose power rests in the eyes of the Vietnamese, not only upon his connections at the Palace but upon apparent unlimited U.S. support for him.

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

380

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

c. No U.S. participation in any new projects involving Tung - specifically the Hamlet Militia Leader Training Program. Our refusal to participate because of Tung should be announced unequivocally to the GVN; we can accompany this by a counterproposal that the CG/SDC Directorate be put in charge since we consider it a worthy project.

d. Cutting Aid to the Motion Picture Center - Direct U.S. - paid personnel at USOM Mopix Centre and other media activities to refuse to handle or process any material prohibited under 1. above. This may cause temporary termination of U. S. participation in some activities under GVN control, and will certainly evoke inspired local press attacks. Useful activities should be carried on by improvised means, with full publicity for Nhu attempts to impede the war effort, and U.S. continuation of effort.

e. Diversion of Ammunition for Police . - Actual physical effect - negligible but psychological effect considerable.

f. Response to attacks in the Times of Viet-Nam. The Ambassador does not wish to demean himself by protesting officially, however, if the U.S. does not defend itself, this will be interpreted as a sign of weakness--the U.S. will lose face and prestige. Suggested counteractions are leaks by Embassy officials such as "the Ambassador refuses to read the rag because of its notorious reputation for outright lying", or other comments indicating the U. S. considers the newspaper ridiculous.

g. Ambassador makes "unannounced" visits on key Vietnamese

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

personalities and key areas. Visits Ministers, JGS, General Don, Dinh, Minh, and others, with the objective of seeking their views and indicating American freedom to talk to whomever we please. Purpose is to build up American prestige and a feeling that we are in charge. Must be carefully stage-managed to avoid embarrassment.

h. Direct immediate procurement in cash, and storage under U.S. control, of approximately 3 million U.S. dollars worth of piastres. The purpose is to make immediately available for essential on-going counter-insurgency programs, the funds already authorized. Possibility of freezing eightier U.S. or provincial bank accounts must not be overlooked.

(2) Covert

a. Suspension of any CAS projects capable of being used by Nhu to build up his prestige and illustrate that the U.S. is continuing to support him. CAS should be prepared to offer recommendations in this regard.

b. Set Dinh and Tung against each other by rumors and reports to Dinh that Tung is plotting to assassinate him, etc.

c. Set Nhu against Tran Van Kiem, Mme Nhu's brother (and thus increase tension between the Nhu's) by getting word to Nhu of what Khiem told Warner about Nhu.

d. Fabricate a document linking Nhu with the DRV thus discrediting him with the Generals.

e. Put out our own black newspaper as a counter to the Times of Vietnam of the regular Vietnamese press.

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

4. Suggested Approach to Nhu

Although the approach by Asta and D'Orlandi to Nhu was unproductive, a further approach might be made by John Richardson. If so, the approach should emphasize the strong possibility of aid cuts by Congress and our decision to cut or redirect aid to those units responsible for the raid on the pagodas along the lines of Lodge's conversation with Diem. Richardson should then appeal to Nhu to leave the country for a long vacation out of loyalty to the family, love of country, and to make possible continued US support of the war effort.

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

383

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

Part C, Phase I

Congressional Action

A resolution expressing the "sense of the Senate" that aid to South Viet-Nam be terminated unless that regime reverses its policies of repression might be useful ammunition for Ambassador Lodge, if it were passed by a substantial margin. With tacit Administration approval, the Church-Carlson resolution has good prospects for passage. In terms of general strategy on the foreign aid bill, such a resolution should be delayed until after Senate passage of the aid bill. Although a case can be made for earlier approval of this resolution, what is contemplated here is not a crash program of sudden aid termination but rather a carefully phased plan which might well benefit from Senate action at a later date.

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

384

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

Part D, Phase I

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLIC POSTURE IN PHASE I

TARGET

Public statements or explanations of U.S. Government actions in phase one should be primarily directed toward those elements of Vietnamese public opinion which our actions are attempting to influence. This means that we should not make it our purpose to inflame mass public unrest. Although demonstrations such as those spontaneously generated by high school students doubtless have an effect even upon fanatics such as the Nhus, on balance they probably result only in more vigorous repression and at the same time more thorough debilitating of the war effort among the "elite". Moreover, agitation whipped up by American public statements which resulted in bloodshed of innocent victims would be an additional burden which we do not wish to bear and which would complicate continued acceptance of our policies here in the United States.

Therefore, since the basic concept is of a surgical operation directed against the Nhu family rather than a massive convulsion in South Vietnam, our propaganda targetting should ^{similarly} be as confined and as precise as we can make it. We should primarily concern ourselves with clarifying what we are attempting to do in the minds of the

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

385

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

Vietnamese "elite". This "elite" must be made aware that our aims and theirs coincide; that we are merely trying to help them remove obstacles which stand in the way of the achievement of their basic goals. They must be made to feel that we are sharing our confidence with them concerning the actions we are taking in the hope that we can continue to rely upon them to provide leadership stability once we have finished our operation.

Exigencies of the American scene may require us from time to time to elaborate on the basic theme and basic targetting of our public output. On the whole, however, we should be able to rely upon interpretive analysis made by a very active and very well-informed American press in clarifying the significance of our statements to the American public.

METHOD

On the whole the Vietnamese "elite" has a very sensitive grapevine which is alert to the significance of actions taken in the political context. On the whole, therefore, actions may be expected to speak at least as loudly as words in most instances. This fact suggests that our best course might be to let our actions speak for

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

386

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

themselves without public explanation. Because of the Machiavellian cleverness of the Nhus, however, this course leaves open the possibility that our actions could be so distorted and manipulated as to make their meaning confused even in the minds of the "elite" observers.

Therefore, while still relying primarily upon the actions rather than the words to carry the import of our objectives, it is felt necessary to make limited public statements concerning the purpose of our undertakings. There follows a short public announcement which it is suggested should be made from the White House at the outset of the actions being directed against Nhu in phase one. This should probably be issued after Ambassador Lodge has made clear to President Diem that we intend to move to undercut the authority of the Nhus.

Once this announcement has been made it is not considered desirable to announce each specific step that is taken in implementation of our operation. Instead, on the assumption that the actions taken will become readily and immediately known to the press, we should merely be prepared to confirm each step as it is taken referring back in each instance to the original announcement.

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

387

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

The Government of the United States is committed to helping the people of Viet-Nam resist and overcome the threat to their peace, security and freedom posed by the subversion and terror of the Communists. We intend to stand by that commitment to the Vietnamese people.

However, recent events in Viet-Nam have demonstrated that some assistance from the United States has been used by certain persons for purposes and in ways repugnant to us. We are determined to prevent these diversions and abuses of our assistance. We have undertaken a review of our aid program and of administrative procedures with a view to taking those actions necessary to halt these abuses by individuals for their selfish ends and to insure that such abuses do not occur in the future.

We believe that these proposed actions by the United States Government will strengthen the efforts of the Vietnamese people in their struggle against the Communists. We think, too, that they will assist Viet-Nam in its efforts to build a stable and popular administration assured of the support of its own people.

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

388

TOP SECRET -- EYES ONLY

Part E, Phase I

EVACUATION OF AMERICAN DEPENDENTS

Evacuation of dependents, as suggested by Ambassador Lodge, might prove to be an important pressure weapon on the GVN. However, it is tricky in its handling. On balance, it seems wise not to order a mass evacuation, but rather a selective evacuation of certain dependents.

(Special means for financing the evacuation and a subvention for split families will have to be found.)

No public announcement would be contemplated. Selective evacuation will, however, probably become known to the press, in which case replies to press queries would be made that certain families have decided to take advantage of means made available to enable them to get away from the tensions in Viet-Nam.

TOP SECRET -- EYES ONLY

389

Phase II.

Purpose

The purpose of Phase II remains the same as in Phase I. The means are highly selective cuts and redirection of U.S. aid designed to avoid as much as possible hurting the war effort but underlining our determination to bring about a change in the Vietnamese Government and policies.

Part A.

Lodge approach to Diem: Lodge should continue his conversations with Diem reminding him of the conversations in Phase I and stating that reluctantly the United States has decided to proceed with the aid cuts Lodge had earlier mentioned--again in order to preserve the program as a whole from a total cut-off by Congress.

Lodge should then warn the President that still further aid cuts might be necessary to avoid losing the whole program on Capitol Hill (Phase III specifics to be worked out).

Part B.

Selective aid cuts: An analysis of the aid cuts contemplated in Phase II follows:

Background Factors

(1) The AID commercial import program and PL 480 deliveries constitute approximately 50-70% of South Viet-Nam's imports.

(2)

(2) Plaster counterpart therefrom constitutes approximately 70% of the GVN military budget.

(3) GVN reserves amount to about \$170 million, i.e., approximately 10 months import cover at 1962 levels.

(4) The SVN general supply and stock position, both economic and military, is good.

(5) So long as the GVN can effectively administer its budget and so long as it can allot foreign exchange from its own reserves, the impact of aid cuts will be psychological rather than real in the short run. The psychological impact is greatest if it is credible that measures taken fore-shadow all-out determination to suspend all U.S. aid for political or other reasons.

Action

The aid cuts recommended in Part II of the Government's program of pressures on the DRV follow:

1. Withhold CIP allotments not yet made for August and not being made in September.

(CIP pipeline will remain relatively solid for about 4 months, then decline to virtually nil in about 8 months. Notwithstanding the negligible economic effect of making no allotments, the psychological effect upon the Saigon business community would be profound and could well provoke hoarding, speculation, price rises and general anxiety, if not panic, about the economic outlook.)

2. Publicly announce cancellation of U.S. support of the Saigon Water Works (\$17.5 million) and the Saigon Electric Power Plant (\$12.7 million).

(These two projects are known to be highly valued by Diem, are conspicuous evidences of long-term U.S. interest in the City of Saigon's development, and are now under way with completion dates 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 years hence. Suspension of these projects would have a conspicuous impact upon public opinion in Saigon and would have to be regarded by Diem as evidence of the seriousness of U.S. doubts regarding its long-term aid intentions in SVN. Cancellation of existing contracts would be costly to the United States and renewed construction would present real difficulties and added expenses. This action might be a more credible reflection of U.S. determination than verbal threats or warnings of possible future U.S. moves. The action should be publicly justified as indicating the uncertainties of the United States over the wisdom of long-term investments in the absence of basic structural changes in the SVN which offer promise of the long-term security and stability of the country.)

4.

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

3. Publicly announce continuation of U.S. support of ongoing programs related to support of the military establishment, counter-insurgency, strategic hamlets, and the social and economic development of the countryside.

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

393

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

UNITED STATES OBJECTIVES IN SOUTH VIET-NAM

The over-all objective in South Viet-Nam is to win the war against the Viet Cong. The subsidiary objective is to bring about such changes in the policies and composition of the Vietnamese Government as to ensure sufficient popular support to accomplish the over-all objective successfully.

It is our judgment that the elite in the cities are now disaffected with the regime and that, since it is this elite that supplies both the military and civil officers on whom the war effort depends, the disaffection will slowly but inevitably affect the war effort. It is Ambassador Lodge's judgment, which we share, that the situation is worsening rapidly--posing the risk of a crisis of desperation in which more and more Vietnamese see their choices as civil war against the government or a sauve qui peut flight to the Viet Cong of individuals and even whole units, as happened in China. Thus, our judgment is also that there is a time urgency.

To restore confidence a change is needed in both policies and personnel. What has happened, however, is that personnel--the Nhus--have become a symbol of policy. The Nhus stand for both the GVN policy of repression and also for US support for the regime and thus for its policies. The Nhus must therefore go. Although our demand for tactical purposes can be couched

TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY

394

in terms of a six months' vacation abroad, they must, in fact, be barred from return until the war is won.

Concurrent with the departure of the Nhus, the GVN should dramatically reverse its policies of repression, i. e., martial law should be lifted and press censorship removed; all those arrested as a result of recent events should be released; a joint statement of reconciliation should be negotiated with the Buddhists, etc.

The Government should then be reorganized and broadened to include respected individuals such as Tran Quoc Buu and Pham Huy Quat, with one or two ministerial posts given to such senior generals as Duong Van Minh (Big Minh) and Le Van Kim, and with the recall to public service of one or two individuals who have left Viet-Nam but have not been associated with exile politics, such as Vu Van Mau and Vu Van Thai.

It should be recognized that, even though it is not our intention to remove Diem, the Ngo family may so resist the removal of the Nhus and a reversal of policies as to make Diem's removal inevitable. If so, our goal should be so to structure the situation that Diem has the options of staying without his brother or retiring to a monastery of his own free will. (At this stage, Diem still retains the loyalty of many of the military and the peasants who would resent his forcible ouster, at least at this stage, but would completely understand his choosing family rather than country.)

FE:RHilsman:vtb 9/11/63

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

27 August 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR COLONEL HIGGINS, SACSA

1. The Problem - Can the counter-insurgency effort in Vietnam be supported assuming the loss of all LOC's thru the Saigon area?
2. Assumptions - Total requirements - 125,000 s/t per mo
(35,000 s/t) POL
(90,000 s/t) Cargo

Saigon -
 1. Only major port in RVN
 2. Major POL storage and distribution center
 3. Major cargo transshipment center
3. Discussion - The loss of the only major port in Vietnam will require use of "out of country" ports and additional over the beach cargo handling. By using the 17 active MSTs LST's and the GVN LST's, the 90,000 s/t of cargo could easily be handled from the ports of Manila and Subic to discharge cargo at the minor ports of Danang, Qui Nhon, Nha Trang, and Can Tho. By redistribution of the airlift, railroad, highway, and waterway capabilities from Saigon to the minor ports the personnel and cargo distribution could be handled with comparative ease.

All POL is furnished by commercial oil companies. At present the majority of all POL is distributed through the port of Saigon. The secondary ports of Danang, Nha Trang, Can Tho, and Cape St. Jacques can be utilized by small coastal tankers and could sustain the POL requirements of the Republic of Vietnam. Up-country stowage can handle about a 60 day supply for military operations. Commercial oil companies have the necessary barges to transport oil to the shallow-draft port of Can Tho.
4. Conclusion - Personnel, cargo, and POL distribution in support of counterinsurgency efforts in the

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

396

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

Republic of Vietnam can be supported without the facilities of the Saigon area provided a sufficient alert is given to ^{remove} necessary transportation equipment from Saigon.

(12 hours needed 1/4)

barges (12)

planes (4)

E. B. McDonald
E. B. McDONALD

Captain, USN

Theaters Division, J-4

Extension 52226

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

397