

DRAFT LETTER

W
FILE SUBJ. *[initials]*
DATE SUB-CAT. *[initials]*
3/75 3/75

Dear Mr. President:

I am very much aware of the difficult times you are now going through. I have asked Ambassador Martin to convey to you my admiration for your determination, your resolution and courage. I am convinced that in the end the South Vietnamese people, under your leadership, will be successful in their fight to preserve their independence and their free institutions.

I very much regret that events over the last twelve months - events which neither of us could completely control - has resulted in a diminution of the American material support which your government had every right to expect. While I deeply regret the consequent military redeployments you have felt compelled to take, I fully understand the reasons for these actions which will reduce extended lines of communication and resupply and permit a more effective concentration of your military forces to defend the vital areas.

The essential problem is to determine with precision the actions we both may now take for the future which will hold the best prospects for the future. Although you may have been getting a rather gloomy assessment of American public and Congressional attitudes on the prospects for adequate

amounts of economic and military aid, I think the situation has now considerably changed. Your own military redeployments have portrayed the actual realities of the current situation in Vietnam far more graphically than words could possibly do. Consequently, there is a growing awareness of the actual need for additional aid and that the amounts must be adequate.

You may rest assured that we will mount an all-out effort to secure from the Congress adequate amounts of aid and we fully realize that it must be done promptly. We will begin this effort with the Congress when it returns from its Easter recess on April 7th.

I wish to insure that I am fully and completely informed and that the military aid requests we shall shortly present to the Congress are specifically designed to meet your actual current needs. I am, therefore, asking your old friend, General Frederick Weyand, to accompany Ambassador Martin on his return to Saigon. I am certain that you will review the current situation with him with complete candor and inform him fully on which items you and your military advisors believe to be the most crucial needs at the present time.

I am also aware that, from time to time, some members of your staff have speculated that American interests elsewhere have lessened the interest of the United States in Viet-Nam. Ambassador Martin informs me that you understand this could not possibly be true since the way we discharge our commitment to the Republic of Viet-Nam inevitably effects the credibility of American interests everywhere. Therefore, our intention remains firmly that when we leave Viet-Nam we will leave it economically viable, militarily capable of defending its freedom with its own manpower, and free to choose its own leaders as its own people may freely determine.

To achieve that goal will require maximum efforts on both sides. It will also require that we remain in close and intimate communication. I have instructed Ambassador Martin to forward directly for my attention such communications which you think necessary.

Our peoples have both surmounted even more difficult times in the past. Once again I am confident that our joint endeavors will be successful.

With my warmest personal good wishes.

Sincerely,

Gerald Ford