

*Enclosure*  
Copy 1 of 7

~~TOP SECRET~~

THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

APR. 17. 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT  
THE WHITE HOUSE

I think you will want to read the enclosed cable, in two sections, from Collins. Also, the preceding cable, in which Collins reports on Ely's talk with Collins.

  
  
John Foster Dulles

Enclosures:

From Saigon -

No. 4382, 4/7/55

No. 4399, 4/7/55

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Authority STATE-DEPT-678

Date 11/21/75

By DJH, NARS Date 12/1/75

INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department of Stat.

Value

19-H

TOP SECRET

Action

Control: 3794  
Rec'd: April 7, 1955  
10:35 a.m.

FE

FROM: Saigon

Info

RMR

SS

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SP

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EUR

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 4382, April 7, 7 p.m. (SECTION ONE OF TWO)

NIACT

SENT DEPARTMENT 4382, REPEATED INFORMATION NIACT PARIS 1174.

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM COLLINS.

PARIS FOR AMBASSADOR AND ACHILLES.

1. Department deliver to Secretary 8 a.m. local time seventh.
2. Ely received me at 1100 7th with no French staff present. He wished to inform me without reservation of results of his reflections on present crisis. He said he had not yet informed his government of views he was about to express. Ely said our mission here is identical, to save Vietnam for free world and to bar Communist advance in Southeast Asia. He said he viewed this mission as one of exceptional importance, and believed no future assignment he or I might have would carry graver responsibility, since we are the "key figures" in present situation.
3. Ely said he and I have been asked to save Vietnam, with Diem. He said he believes we have done everything possible, even if he for his part may have been maladroit at times. Thus far we had avoided civil war, which would mean loss of Vietnam. He continued saying Diem can no longer be saved except at cost of overcoming enormous difficulties, and if he is saved, we shall have spared for Vietnam the worst Prime Minister it ever had.
4. Ely believed Diem is entirely isolated save for his family and perhaps a dozen friends. Army has virtually abandoned him; intellectuals are against him; and the masses are not for him, but rather for whoever is willing exert effort to win and hold them. Diem's prestige has dropped dangerously in provinces, and in army only two or three leaders are loyal to him.

5. The joint approach to Bao Dai which we had agreed to recommend to our governments might save Diem temporarily, but latter's problems would be identical. Ely said that for a Nationalist, Diem is in extraordinary position of being supported

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Authority: STATE DEPT. 478

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-2-4382, April 7, 7 p.m.; (SECTION ONE OF TWO) from Saigon

being supported only by Ely and myself and in consequence is more of a puppet than any of his predecessors. He said he felt deeply it was in interest of Vietnam and free world that Diem not be saved. He said on contrary Diem must be rapidly replaced since continued delay can only compromise future of Vietnam. Accordingly, he said, he and I must demonstrate to our governments it is impossible to continue longer on present course and our governments must now ask Bao Dai to remove Diem and name a successor.

6. Ely went on to say that in his opinion Vietnam can still be saved, and cited these favorable factors:

A. Viet Minh are not as active in Vietnam as one might have feared.

B. Economic situation is relatively good, as compared with north.

C. Population is still relatively neutral and can yet be taken in hand.

D. Army contains good raw material that can be whipped into respectable shape in next few months by Trim.

E. The government has in its files excellent plans and reforms, worked out by us, which can be implemented by a new and more efficient government.

7. Ely said these favorable elements were reinforced by absolute obligation which French and US have towards refugees, whom they have rescued from north.

8. Ely said he would not pretend Diem's record was all bad, and would hope Diem might be included in a future Cabinet. To Diem's credit, Ely cited relative calm which was maintained after Geneva, services rendered to refugees, and social plans which have been adopted under Prime Minister's direction. However, he continued, another man is urgently required to carry out major programs and prepare for elections. We should not, he said, say Diem experiment had been a mistake, but rather that his time is now past and choice of a new man is imperative.

9. Ely said

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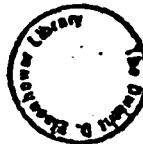
~~TOP SECRET~~

-3-4382, April 7, 7 p.m. (SECTION ONE OF TWO) from Saigon

9. Ely said importance he attached to his and my collaboration was such that he had informed me of his conclusions before speaking of them even to his closest associates. He added that day before yesterday he had believed we must continue to support Diem but that today, April 7, after a full day of "soul searching" from all angles, he was forced to conclude that in order to save Vietnam for free world, Diem must be replaced. He said he realized I would need time to consider his remarks and did not ask for an answer at once.

KIDDER

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INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department of Stat.

19-H

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Action

Control: 3845  
Rec'd: April 7, 1955  
1:03 p.m.

FE

FROM: Saigon

Info

TO: Secretary of State

RMR

NO: 4382, April 7, 7 p.m. (SECTION TWO OF TWO)

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SENT DEPARTMENT 4382; REPEATED INFORMATION NIACT PARIS 1174

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM COLLINS

PARIS FOR AMBASSADOR AND ACHILLES

10. I told Ely I appreciated his sincerity, frankness with which he had spoken, and gravity of his views. I asked if I was to take these views as final. He said that I was so to take them and that they had been arrived at in full consciousness of his civil and military responsibilities. He said he had gathered as much information as he could and had considered problem entirely independently. I said if action was taken along lines he proposed, the first question to consider would be possible successors. Ely replied he was prepared to accept anyone but Diem, provided new appointee did not mark return to colonialism. He said he had made no specific inquiry of his staff but that he could cite following as possible successors: Quat, Foreign Minister Do, Minister for plan Thaoi, and former Defense Minister Minh. I did not discuss this list with Ely, who offered it only by way of example, but did say that my information indicated there might be widespread opposition to Quat as northerner, Dai Viet and persona non grata to sects. Ely replied he did not take these objections to Quat very seriously and said everything possible should be done to prevent change of administration from appearing as victory for sects. I said to Ely I believed it would be very difficult to prevent any other interpretation by press and public.

11. I told Ely I would have to have time to consider his statement but that I believed I could say Washington might not (repeat not) be willing to give any consideration to replacement of Diem until after French-US had brought maximum pressure on Bao Dai to back Diem fully in relieving Binh Xuyen completely of police and surete controls. I said in any case this must be done. Ely said he agreed Binh Xuyen could not be allowed continue control police, but he felt this change must be made within framework of a new and

general

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Date 1/1/2015

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-2- 4382, April 7, 7 p.m. (SECTION TWO OF TWO), from Saigon

general solution. As for our bringing pressure on Bao Dai and Bao Dai's bringing pressure on Binh Xuyen, it was quite possible that sects might be unresponsive to Bao Dai and might go underground, possibly even with tacit concurrence of Bao Dai. Ely commented once more on the anomaly of Bao Dai's being 12,000 kilometers from scene of action and endowed with authority which he can assert without risk to himself. He added hastily however he did not favor Bao Dai's return to Vietnam. Ely went on to say he agreed with me that if government were changed, police control should be changed within overall new framework.

12. I told Ely I would have to report his views to Department but would restrict dissemination of them here. He said he would, of course, report to his own government at once, similarly restricting distribution.

13. I said to Ely I could not at once tell him whether I agreed with his position or not. I was inclined to feel we had not gone far enough in our support of Diem to render such a change acceptable now. Ely said he was certain that we stand on the verge of a grave crisis. He feels uneasy movements of all sorts throughout Vietnam, Communist or "Progressive" inspired.

14. I remarked that if change in government were made that would not get at root of sect problem, and any new Chief would have same difficulties. I analyzed present crisis as arising from fact French had stopped aiding sect suppliers, by agreement with US, and from Diem's and our steps to create a single army, and various reforms which threaten sect position and privileges. I added that unless we could agree on solution to sect problem, we would do no more than preserve intact for any new Prime Minister same problems which have beset Diem. Ely agreed sect problem must be solved but said it was more vast than my analysis indicated. At present it has reached state in which personal animosity between Diem and sect leaders is such that no compromise between them is possible.

15. I said I believed we had discussed this matter enough for time being. I agreed Diem is exceedingly difficult for everyone to do business with. I said I was not sure a change would solve our problem. In any case, if there is change of government, there must be firm agreement between France and US, with agreement of Bao Dai, enforced if necessary, that our various programs will be completely supported.

I suggested

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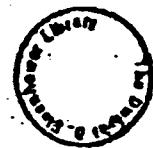
I suggested Ely quickly complete his study of our current proposal for treating sect problem (Embassy telegram 4373) and that we discuss it later in day. He agreed meet with me at 1730.

16. I asked Ely if he thought Quat or Do or another would accept office of Prime Minister. He said he had no doubt of it. While nearly everyone is reluctant to serve under Diem, there is no problem about finding people willing to take over top job. I said I was sure Diem would not remain in any future Cabinet but would probably withdraw to write a White Paper attacking France and US. Ely said he thought best solution for Diem would be some kind of "mystic mission" to deal with Vietnamese refugee problem, which is a world problem, at a world level.

17. My personal comments and recommendations will follow, after some further reflection, in special message to Secretary.

KIDDER

LFS/6



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INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department of State

27-21

TOP SECRET

Action  
FE

Control: 3952  
Rec'd: APRIL 7, 1955

Info  
RMR

3:01 PM

FROM: SAIGON

TO: Secretary of State

SS

NO: 4399, APRIL 7, 11 PM (SECTION ONE OF TWO)

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NIACT

FOR SECRETARY FROM COLLINS.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY:

ADVANCE COPY

EVEN BEFORE RECEIVING YOUR KIND LETTER (DEPTEL 4330) I HAD BEEN  
CONSIDERING WRITING YOU PERSONALLY AS TO MY ESTIMATE OF PRESIDENT  
DIEM'S CHANCES OF SUCCESSFULLY REMAINING AS PRESIDENT OF VIET  
NAM. I HAVE JUST FILED A DESHATCH (EMBTEL 4382) GIVING GENERAL  
ELY'S FINAL VIEWS ON THIS POINT. YOU AND THE PRESIDENT ARE  
ENTITLED TO MY JUDGMENT IN LIGHT OF THIS AND OTHER RECENT EVENTS.

AS YOU KNOW, I HAVE BEEN DOING EVERYTHING WITHIN MY POWER TO  
ASSIST DIEM IN ACCORDANCE WITH MY ORIGINAL DIRECTIVE FROM THE  
PRESIDENT AND SUBSEQUENT INSTRUCTIONS FROM YOU AND THE DEPARTMENT  
IN VARIOUS MESSAGES, AND IN MY JANUARY REPORT, I HAVE INDICATED  
MY GROWING DOUBTS AS TO DIEM'S CAPACITY FOR LEADERSHIP UNDER  
THE DIFFICULT AND COMPLEX CONDITIONS EXISTING IN VIET NAM.

I MUST SAY NOW THAT MY JUDGMENT IS THAT DIEM DOES NOT HAVE THE  
CAPACITY TO ACHIEVE THE NECESSARY UNITY OF PURPOSE AND ACTION  
FROM HIS PEOPLE WHICH IS ESSENTIAL TO PREVENT THIS COUNTRY FROM  
FALLING UNDER COMMUNIST CONTROL. I SAY THIS WITH GREAT REGRET,  
BUT WITH FIRM CONVICTION.

DURING THE FIVE MONTHS THAT I HAVE BEEN HERE I HAVE COME TO ADMIRE  
DIEM GREATLY IN MANY WAYS. HE HAS VALUABLE SPIRITUAL QUALITIES,  
IS INCORRUPTIBLE, IS A DEVOTED NATIONALIST, HAS GREAT TENACITY.  
HOWEVER, THESE VERY QUALITIES, LINKED WITH HIS LACK OF PRACTICAL  
POLITICAL SENSE, HIS INABILITY TO COMPROMISE, HIS INHERENT  
INCAPACITY TO GET ALONG WITH OTHER ABLE MEN, AND HIS TENDENCY  
TO BE SUSPICIOUS OF THE MOTIVES OF ANY ONE WHO DISAGREES WITH  
HIM, MAKE HIM PRACTICALLY INCAPABLE OF HOLDING THIS GOVERNMENT  
TOGETHER. AS I HAVE OFTEN POINTED OUT, HE PAYS MORE ATTENTION  
TO THE ADVICE OF HIS BROTHERS LUYEN AND NHU THAN HE DOES TO  
GENERAL ELY OR ME. HE HAS CONSISTENTLY FAILED TO DECENTRALIZE  
RESPONSIBILITY

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Authority STATE DEPT GEN  
Date 11/24/65  
By DTH

NARS Date 12/2/75

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-2- 4399, APRIL 7, 11 PM (SECTION 1 OF 2) FROM SAIDON

RESPONSIBILITY TO HIS MINISTERS, OR TO CONSULT WITH THEM IN ADVANCE OF REACHING IMPORTANT DECISIONS. THIS HAS RESULTED IN THE RESIGNATION OF THE FEW ABLE MEN IN HIS CABINET WHO WERE NOT REPEAT NOT "YES MEN."

I AGREE WITH THE APPRAISAL OF GENERAL ELY AND OF MEN LIKE DR. QUAT, DO AND MINH, THAT DIEM WILL NOT SUCCEED IN GETTING ANY NEW MEN OF ABILITY TO JOIN EVEN A REORGANIZED GOVERNMENT. DAMAGING AS THE ABOVE FACTS ARE, PERHAPS EVEN MORE SERIOUS IS THE PRESIDENT'S APPARENT INCAPACITY FOR CREATIVE THINKING AND PLANNING. AT NO TIME SINCE I HAVE BEEN HERE HAS HE OFFERED TO ME A SINGLE CONSTRUCTIVE THOUGHT OF HIS OWN VOLITION. ALL OF THE PROGRESSIVE PROGRAMS WHICH WE HAVE ATTRIBUTED TO HIM HAVE IN FACT BEEN DEVELOPED THROUGH THE COOPERATIVE EFFORTS OF GENERAL ELY AND ME, AND OUR STAFFS. I AM STILL NOT SURE WHETHER DIEM REALLY GRASPS THE FULL SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE PROGRAMS, OR THE GREAT DIFFICULTIES OF IMPLEMENTING THEM.

KIDDER

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INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department of Stat.

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Action  
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Control: 3950

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Recd: APRIL 7, 1955  
8 P.M.

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FROM: SAIGON

ADVANCE COPY

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 4399, APRIL 7, 11 P.M. (SECTION II OF II)

INSTEAD OF STICKING TO THE CLEAR BUT DIFFICULT ROAD LEADING TO THE CONVERSION OF THESE PAPER PLANS INTO ACCOMPLISHED FACTS, DIEM HAS BEEN EVER READY LIKE DON QUIXOTE TO DASH OFF ON SIDE EXCURSIONS TO TILT WITH WINDMILLS. AND WHILE BENT ON THESE EXCURSIONS, WHETHER THEY BE TO DISPLACE OFFICERS OF THE ARMY WHOM HE REGARDED AS LOYAL TO GENERAL HINH, TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST SOAI OR BA CUT, OR TO RELIEVE A POLICE CHIEF, HE LOSES ALL SENSE OF DIRECTION TOWARD THE ESSENTIAL GOALS, AND IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO BRING HIM BACK TO THE HIGH ROAD. WE HAVE HAD MANY SUCH TILTINGS.

IN SUMMARY, DESPITE HIS SEVERAL FINE QUALITIES, IT IS MY CONSIDERED JUDGMENT THAT THE MAN LACKS THE PERSONAL QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP AND THE EXECUTIVE ABILITY SUCCESSFULLY TO HEAD A GOVERNMENT THAT MUST COMPETE WITH THE UNITY OF PURPOSE AND EFFICIENCY OF THE VIET MINH UNDER HO CHI MINH.

IN SAYING THIS I HASTEN TO ADD THAT I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT DIEM IS INDISPENSABLE FOR THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF OUR PURPOSES IN VIET NAM, THAT IS, TO SAVE THE COUNTRY FROM COMMUNISM. PROGRAMS WHICH GENERAL ELY AND I HAVE DEVELOPED ARE, I BELIEVE, SOUND AND SUSCEPTIBLE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT. BUT OUR SUCCESSORS HERE MUST HAVE A PRESIDENT AND A CABINET TO WORK WITH, WHICH TO SOME DEGREE WILL TALK OUR LANGUAGE AND WILL STICK STEADFASTLY TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE PROGRAMS.

I BELIEVE THAT TRAN VAN DO OR DR. QUAT COULD FORM AND SUCCESSFULLY HEAD SUCH A GOVERNMENT.

IF OUR GOVERNMENT SHOULD ACCEPT SUCH A CHANGE, I WOULD URGE THAT WE STIPULATE AS A PRIOR CONDITION THE REMOVAL, BY PRESIDENT DIEM WITH THE COMPLETE SUPPORT OF BAO DAI, OF THE CONTROL OF THE

NATIONAL POLICE

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-2- 4399, APRIL 7, 11 P.M., FROM SAIGON (SECTION II OF II)

NATIONAL POLICE AND SURETE FROM THE BINH XUYEN. YOU MAY FEEL THAT IF THIS IS DONE, DIEM SHOULD BE GIVEN FURTHER TIME TO SEE WHETHER HE CAN BROADEN HIS GOVERNMENT AND SPEED UP PROGRESS. I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BETTER NOT TO WAIT. BY HAVING SAVED A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF FACE FOR DIEM BY THE TRANSFER OF POLICE POWERS FROM THE BINH XUYEN WE SHOULD THEN ACCEDE TO THE APPOINTMENT OF DO OR QUIT AS PRESIDENT OF THE COUNTRY.

I FEEL IT BETTER NOT FURTHER TO LENGTHEN THIS LETTER BY OUTLINING THE SUCCESSIVE STEPS WHICH I WOULD RECOMMEND BE FOLLOWED IN ORDER TO CONSTITUTE A NEW GOVERNMENT AND SETTLE THE SHORT AND LONG TERM PROBLEMS OF THE SECTS. I SHALL BE PREPARED TO SUBMIT SUCH RECOMMENDATIONS PROMPTLY, IF YOU SO DESIRE.

I FULLY APPRECIATE GRAVITY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS I HAVE MADE ABOVE. I NEED NOT TELL YOU WITH WHAT A HEAVY HEART I FILE THIS MESSAGE. HOWEVER, IT IS BY NO MEANS WITH A FEELING OF DEFEAT FOR OUR OBJECTIVE HERE. I STILL FEEL THAT UNDER PROPER NATIVE LEADERSHIP, WHICH CAN BE HAD, THE PROGRAMS WHICH WE HAVE INITIATED CAN STILL BE MADE EFFECTIVE AND CAN SAVE VIET NAM FROM COMMUNISM.

FAITHFULLY, JOE COLLINS.

CES/33

KIDDER

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