

SECRET

Mr. William C. Truckheart

September 6, 1963

Rufus Phillips

Recommended Action to Rebuild and Maintain U. S. Prestige, discredit the Nhu's, and encourage the Emergence of Local Opposition

1. The Situation. The Vietnamese potential opposition to the Nhu's is gravely disheartened by an apparent U. S. position of condoning Nhu directed actions by continuing to support a Nhu directed Government. Unless actions can be taken to indicate where the U. S. stands, effective opposition to the GVN as presently constituted is unlikely to emerge. Nhu has the whip hand, is rubbing our noses in the dirt in public and getting away with it. So far as the Vietnamese can see, the U. S. has no determination to even defend itself much less force the Nhu's out.

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 Nhu's. 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 Nhu's 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, encourage the opposition and discredit the Nhu's.

3. Recommended Actions.

I. Overt

a. 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. This action can be expected to greatly encourage ARVN leaders.

SECRET

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S E C R E T

- 2 -

b. 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.

c. Diversion of Ammunition for the Police (already mentioned by O. Williams). Actual physical effect - negligible but psychological effect considerable.

d. Response to attacks in the Times of Vietnam. 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. The suggested counteraction is a leak by an Embassy official that the Ambassador refuses to read the rag because of its notorious reputation for outright lying. This can be followed by another comment to the press that whoever writes such nonsense should consult a psychiatrist since the writer is obviously insane.

e. Ambassador makes "unannounced" visits on key Vietnamese 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.

II. 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 (and thus increase tension between the Nhu's) by getting word to Nhu of what Kiem told Warner about Nhu.

d. Fabricate documents discrediting Nhu with the Generals.

e. Put out our own black paywar as a counter to The Times of Vietnam.

cc: Mr. J. L. Brent

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- 2 -

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