

6, RCP
(Draft of letter for
P.S. Dirin to send to Pres. Kennedy)
July 1963

Dear Mr. President:

My warmest personal greetings to you during this, the one hundred eighty-eighth year of American independence. As I think back on the military and political struggles which preceded and followed the Declaration of Independence; on the cabals and plots which sought to oust General Washington from his command; and on the charges and counter-charges of religious discrimination which persisted so long; I am irresistibly struck by the similarities to some of the problems which face my country today.

Thanks in large measure to the aid which America has so generously given, in things of the spirit and of the mind, as well as material aid, we have now for nine years been able to maintain the independence which we seized after the debacle of the 1954 Geneva Accords. So well have we succeeded, so relatively secure does our victory appear, that not only do some men, as always, seek their own advancement, but many others, weary of war, attach undue importance to questions of prestige or petty charges of discrimination or preference. The result of all this is that, in truth, in my estimation Vietnam today is passing through its most perilous period since the same months of 1954, when it was threatened from every side. We were threatened by the communists, torn by internal power-seeking religious sects, disdained and despised by the French who hoped to see us fail, and, not least, jeopardized by a lack of American understanding of our problems and the spectre of the possible withdrawal of American aid.

In large part our success in that period was due to the always thoughtful, understanding, and sincere advice which I received from General Lansdale. In assessing, and seeking means to rectify the situation which now exists here, I again most strongly feel the need for his understanding assistance. His intimate knowledge of my country and its problems, as well as his understanding of and status among people, Vietnamese and American, who can do most to help solve current problems, in my considered judgment, makes his presence here the most valuable single aid which your country could give to mine at this time. This is no reflection on your able representatives here, whom I sincerely respect; nor is it a reflection upon the many able and valued men in my government. It is, instead, a recognition of General Lansdale's ability, and of his unique position in our respect and affection.

I realize that it must be difficult to spare General Lansdale from his many important duties in the United States, but I believe also that our situation is so grave as to justify relieving him from those duties, and assigning him here, temporarily, as a matter of the highest priority. The catalytic effect of his presence may well be the factor which resolves the present situation, enabling us to move rapidly ahead to the goal which we seek.

Let me express again, Mr. President, my personal appreciation, as well as that of the Vietnamese people, for all the assistance and understanding which has been extended to us by yourself and your great nation, and my hope that we may continue to march forward together on the road to freedom for all men, and all nations.