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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION
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The United States Senate

R379

Report of Proceedings

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2/29/77
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Hearing held before

Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental
Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities

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Friday, June 20, 1975

Washington, D.C.

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	<u>CONTENTS</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1		
2	<u>TESTIMONY OF</u>	
3	Lucien Conein	14
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9	<u>EXHIBITS</u>	
10	<u>EXHIBIT</u>	<u>FOR IDENTIFICATION</u>
11	Conein No. 1	26
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		
31		
32		
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1 EXECUTIVE SESSION

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3 Friday, June 20, 1975

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5 United States Senate,
6 Select Committee to Study Governmental
7 Operations with Respect to
8 Governmental Activities,
9 Washington, D. C.

10 The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:15 o'clock
11 p.m., in Room S-407, The Capitol, Senator John Tower presiding.
12 Present: Senators Hart of Michigan, Huddleston, Mondale,
13 Morgan, Tower (presiding), Mathias, Baker and Schweiker.

14 Also present: William Miller, Staff Director; Frederick
15 A. O. Schwarz, Jr., Chief Counsel; Curtis R. Smothers, Minority
16 Counsel; and Frederick Baron, Charles Kirbow, Burton Wides,
17 Michael J. Madigan, William Bader, David Aaron and Patrick
18 Shea, Professional Staff Members.

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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(2:15 p.m.)

3

Senator Tower. The Committee will come to order.

4

Before we proceed to hear the witness, I think we should have a report from the team that went down to the White House this morning to examine some documents, and I believe they will report to us and have a recommendation on how the Committee should agree to handle this material, and shall I call on --

9

Senator Mondale. Howard has the notes.

10

Senator Tower. I call on Senator Baker.

11

Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, Bill Bader has the notes.

12

Senator Mondale. Well then, call on me. I can read them.

13

Senator Tower. Mr. Bader?

14

Mr. Bader. Thank you, Senator.

15

The documents that we reviewed briefly at the White House situation room were four different categories.

17

In the first category, there were copies of the so-called Mongoose files. These files contain minutes of the Special Group Augmented and copies of the rest of the Mongoose files, arranged in chronological order. And these holdings are from the files of the Executive Secretary of the 40 Committee and include the files of the Chairman and the Executive Secretary of the Special Group Augmented.

18

Also these trust files are turned over to the Chairman by General Lansdale after the group ceased functioning, that is,

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1 the Mongoose group. As I looked at them, there were about a
2 hundred documents in this first group.

3 The second group of documents are CIA's Mongoose files,
4 which we have already seen. There are some six files, and I
5 assume these are the same files, and we have seen them. But of
6 course, we didn't have a chance to go through them with any
7 care.

8 The third group of files were the Rockefeller Commission
9 papers and files on assassination, and that includes the summary
10 of facts, the investigation of plans for the assassination of
11 Castro and perhaps more than Castro, the other assassinations,
12 Trujillo as well.

13 Mr. Madigan. Lumumba's in there and also a reference to
14 Sukarno.

15 Mr. Baker. That is a some 80 or 90 page document which, as
16 I say, is a summary of facts, and this was prepared by David
17 Belin.

18 Senator Baker. It might be important to note here, Mr.
19 Chairman, that the White House indicated to us that that summary
20 was not a Rockefeller Commission document and did not necessarily
21 represent the position of the Rockefeller Commission as such.

22 That is the way I interpret their language.

23 I get the impression that this may have been a summary that
24 was not accepted for conclusion in the report, therefore there
25 may be some conflict.

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1 Senator Morgan. It was prepared by whom?

2 Senator Baker. Belin, the Executive Director.

3 Mr. Bader. The last category, the fourth category, are
4 some Special Group minutes, that is, a file, it is a tiny file.
5 really, of assassinations and allegations, and these minutes
6 were culled from Special Group meetings and they are highly
7 selective in the sense that they are documents as they could
8 find them in their search that related only to Cuba and it is
9 clear that there is a great deal more to come in this category
10 of the Special Group minutes. It was just on Cuba. There was
11 nothing on the other assassinations.

12 Senator Schweiker. You mean more that you have not seen
13 yet?

14 Mr. Bader. More that they have not put together as yet,
15 or at least they have not made available to us, and those were
16 the four categories.

17 It is a little hard to judge just how much work it will
18 take to go through them. It is, I would say, somewhere around
19 400 to 500 pages, perhaps.

20 Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, I would ask Fritz and Bill
21 to monitor what I'm about to say next to make sure that I reflect
22 it accurately.

23 There is a general uneasiness at the White House about
24 letting us have these documents unrestricted, although pretty
25 clearly they are committed to let us have them, under some

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1 circumstance.

2 It is also clear to me that some documents have not yet
3 been located and supplied to us and that parts of some documents
4 have been deleted. I think we probably can get that deleted
5 information before very long.

6 The suggestion was made that we ask the White House to
7 bring those documents up here by their own personnel on Monday
8 so that we could use them to examine witnesses. If they care
9 to keep someone here to retain technical possession of the
10 documents, to take them back with them at the close of that day
11 or any day on which we use them, they might do that, and that
12 sooner or later we would have to find a way to utilize those
13 documents, meaning to put certain documents in the record
14 or to read them into the record or to supply copies.

15 Rod Hill seemed to think well of that idea. I told him
16 that I would suggest it to Senator Tower and to the rest of
17 the Committee, and hopefully Senator Tower or Senator Church
18 would be back in touch with the White House to see if we can
19 negotiate an agreement along those lines. I think we can. I
20 think the White House will agree to that arrangement.

21 Senator Mondale. There are two points I would like to
22 make.

23 Senator Tower. Fritz?

24 Senator Mondale. I think Hills was saying, from some of
25 the documentation we looked at it was clear that we may not yet

1 have all of the documents that we ought to look at, and I think
2 they are looking for more documents. Things we read referred
3 to things that were not there. So I don't think we can be
4 satisfied yet that the full record is available for perusal.

5 The second thing is, in our quick look it is very apparent
6 that we must have the documentation. I saw some which would
7 have been very important in our questioning McCone, which may
8 have helped him remember things. It was very central to it.

9 I think we wasted a couple of hours when it could have been
10 done very quickly with one or two documents.

11 I saw, there were several other documents that immediately
12 struck me as being essential to our work. I don't think we saw
13 anything that was revolutionary or that filled in a lot of the
14 central gaps.

15 Senator Tower. You didn't see anything that was sensitive
16 to the extent that it might reflect on a foreign government,
17 or something like that?

18 Senator Mondale. There might be stuff in there, honestly,
19 I don't know. But just looking at our work --

20 Senator Tower. What you're saying, Fritz, is you don't
21 think we need all of it, that we could select out some of it.
22 Is that it?

23 Senator Mondale. What I am saying is I think there is
24 more available somewhere than we saw, and they said they are
25 still looking. Mills said he wasn't satisfied that it was all

6

1 there yet, and secondly, we've got to have it.

2 Senator Tower. Right.

3 Senator Mondale. And we need it for cross-examination and
4 we need it --

5 Senator Tower. Well, the question is, do you need every-
6 thing that you looked at today, or do you think --

7 Senator Mondale. I don't know. Some of the stuff we
8 already have.

9 Mr. Baker. Some, we already have.

10 Senator Mondale. So we don't need that.

11 Senator Tower. Yes.

12 Senator Mondale. The other material, it struck me that
13 I don't see what we have to lose by having most of it. I think
14 most of it is historical.

15 Senator Baker. I think we ought to have all of it, John.
16 The essence of the suggestion I tried to make was that we have
17 physically present in this room all of it, and then we can decide
18 how we use it and what parts of it.

19 Senator Huddleston. One question on the documents.

20 Is that just the material that the Rockefeller Commission
21 has had?

22 Senator Baker. No, the Rockefeller Commission apparently
23 has not had these NSC minutes.

24 Senator Mondale. They did not have the NSC minutes.

25 Mr. Schwarz. They asked for them and we were told about

1 ten days ago that the White House refused to give it to the
2 Rockefeller Commission for some reason.

3 Senator Baker. That's right.

4 Senator Mondale. The interesting thing, among other things,
5 it tells you exactly who was at all of these meetings.

6 Senator Baker. That's remarkable, there's no doubt about
7 who was there and in most cases who said what.

8 Senator Mondale. The heat was on, there's no doubt about
9 that.

10 Senator Tower. You've heard Senator Baker's proposal.
11 Is it the sense of the Committee that we should adopt that
12 procedure for now, at least, for -- let's say, what is it,
13 Monday that we want them up here?

14 Mr. Schwarz. Bundy is coming at 2:00 o'clock on Monday
15 and we've set an opportunity to meet with him and go over and
16 refresh his recollection and so forth. Are we entitled to have
17 them for that purpose as well as the actual use of them at the
18 hearing?

19 Senator Baker. My understanding is that there is to be no
20 restriction on our use of them.

21 Senator Mondale. We not only need them, but we need them
22 in a way that they're useful to us on cross-examination. Now, as
23 I understand it, the staff will be down there this afternoon and
24 maybe into tomorrow and the next day, for that matter.

25 Senator Tower. So the staff can sift through some of this?

1 Mr. Schwarz. And digest it, and so forth.

2 Senator Mondale. And we should ask that the materials
3 that are appropriate or relevant to the next witness be avail-
4 able to us and that staff have them organized in order
5 to help us.

6 Senator Baker. There is a point there I'd like to vary on a
7 little.

8 I don't want to give the White House an opportunity to pick
9 out of that stuff what they're going to send up here. I would
1 like our request to be to send all of it, and then for us to
2 decide here, with the White House concurrence, on how we use it.
3 that is, do we read it into the record, do we photocopy it, or
4 do they supply us a copy of it.

5 Let us make the essence of it that they send it here.

6 Senator Tower. The proposition by Senator Baker is that
7 we ask them to bring the documents here, allow the bearer to
8 be present while the documents are being used, so they maintain
9 technical possession and take them back to the White House after
we have used them in our session or subsequent sessions.
Then we can determine at a later time what final disposition we
make.

10 Is that correct, Howard?

11 Senator Baker. That's correct.

12 Senator Tower. I was not able to get Senator Church. He
13 is off in the wilds of Idaho.

1 Mr. Schwarz. I talked with him last night, and this is
2 quite consistent with our conversation.

3 Senator Tower. I think this will be agreeable with him,
4 but I told his secretary that if, for any reason, after he gets
5 in touch with his office he does find it objectionable that I
6 would reopen the matter in a subsequent meeting.

7 Senator Mondale. Just one question.

8 There would not be a White House staff person here during
9 someone's testimony?

1 Mr. Schwarz. They'd sit outside the door.

2 Senator Mondale. I don't think he should be here as a
3 monitor.

4 Senator Baker. I think that's a point we'll have to make
5 clear. I agree with you, Fritz, he ought to be physically
6 present, like guarding the door that we don't run off with it,
7 but not here.

8 Senator Tower. And we would undertake that we're not going
9 to xerox them or anything while he's sitting out there.

1 Is that agreed on by everybody? Is there any objection to
2 that?

3 Then that is the way we will proceed.

4 Senator Baker. Mike Madigan makes a point that's well
5 taken. It was Mike's understanding that Will's was telling us
6 there were certain other documents that he had already identified
7 but had not yet reviewed and we ought to make sure that we get

1 all of those as well.

2 Senator Tower. I think the problem down there is they do
3 not have enough staff to get all of this stuff together, is that
4 it?

5 Senator Baker. I think the problem is they do not want to
6 be taken by surprise.

7 Senator Huddleston. They want to see it all first.

8 Senator Tower. They want to see it before it comes to us?

9 Senator Baker. I don't blame them.

10 Senator Tower. I understand Mr. Kissinger has some interest
11 in seeing them.

12 Senator Mondale. I think that's why they don't have enough
13 staff.

14 Senator Tower. Okay.

15 Is there anything else of a housekeeping nature to come
16 up?

17 Senator Baker. I might say to the Committee, Mr. Chairman,
18 that you conducted a most intriguing interview with Mr. Angleton
19 yesterday.

20 Senator Tower. We did. In effect, we took a deposition
21 from him in my office yesterday, and I think it was very
22 illuminating, to say the least.

23 Senator Morgan. He looks the part.

24 Senator Baker. He sure does.

25 Senator Tower. So I would suggest to the Committee

11
1 the reading of that deposition. I think it would be worth your
2 time.

Senator Baker and Senator Mathias were there also.

All right.

Mr. Kirbow?

6 Mr. Kirbow. Mr. Chairman, I think it would be helpful to
7 the members if they know that when Mr. Conein is testifying that
8 he has before him what he refers to as an afteraction report,
9 in which both he and the Station Chief before Mr. [REDACTED] Mr.
Richardson, John Richardson, compiled immediately after the coun
took place in Saigon.

He is going to limit his testimony principally, since he has no personal knowledge of the Washington scene, to painting for the Committee, if you will, a picture of the events that transpired from early May of 1963 on through the time of the coup, and he will then be prepared to answer any questions, much as we did with Mr. Colby this morning.

Senator Tower. He wants to proceed in narrative form?

Mr. Kirbow. Yes.

Senator Tower. All right, we will proceed with Mr. Conrin.

(Whereupon, at 2:27 o'clock p.m., the witness entered the hearing room.)

12

13

1 Senator Tower. Mr. Conein, thank you for coming today.
2 We will be questioning you under oath today, so if you would
3 raise your right hand, do you solemnly swear that the testimony
4 you are about to give before this Committee is the truth, the
5 whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

6 Mr. Conein. I do, sir.

7 Senator Tower. Counsel will advise you on your rights.

8 Mr. Kirbow. Please be seated.

9 Mr. Schwarz. Mr. Conein, just a couple of procedural
10 matters.

11 You are aware that you have the right to counsel?

12 Mr. Conein. Right.

13 Mr. Schwarz. And if at any time you want to stop and
14 obtain counsel in the middle of these proceedings you have
15 that right as well?

16 Mr. Conein. Yes.

17 Mr. Schwarz. And of course you have all your constitutional
18 rights including your rights under the Fifth Amendment, you
19 understand that?

20 Mr. Kirbow will question you.

21 Senator Tower. Mr. Kirbow?

13

14

1 TESTIMONY OF LUCIEN E. CONEIN

2 Mr. Kirbow. Mr. Conein, for the record would you please
3 state your full name, your current address, and present
4 occupation?

5 Mr. Conein. My name is Lucien E. Conein, C-o-n-e-i-n.
6 I live at 1111 Ingleside -- I-n-g-l-e-s-i-d-e -- Avenue,
7 McLean, Virginia.

8 I am employed by the Department of Justice Drug Enforcement
9 Administration.

10 Mr. Kirbow. Thank you.

11 Mr. Conein, would you be good enough to give the Committee
12 a brief synopsis of your background from the time you first
13 became engaged in any government work, either military or
14 civilian?

15 Mr. Conein. I enlisted in the Army in 1941, September of
16 1941, and in 1943 I graduated from OCS in Fort Benning, Georgia.

17 At that time, I had been asked to volunteer for the Office
18 of Strategic Services, which I did, and was sent to England for
19 further training in the Special Operations Executive, which was
20 an organization affiliated with the OSS under British Command.

21 I was parachuted behind the lines in France in 1944. In
22 December, 1944 I returned to the United States and I was sent
23 for training preparatory to going to the China, Burma, India
24 theatre which I did in 1945.

25 In March of 1945, the French garrison in French Indochina

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1 had been attacked by the Japanese and I was asked to parachute
2 into the area to recuperate elements of the French forces, to
3 consolidate them, retrain them, go back into Indochina and to
4 form a base for operations in the northern part of Indochina.

5 This I did and later on I was in Hanoi with the Viet Minh
6 I took over in 1945, and I stayed until 1946 when I came back to
7 the United States and then I was sent to the SSU mission, which
8 was the predecessor of the CIA, to Germany and I served in the
9 SSU, the CIG and the CIA.

1 I left Germany in 1953, still in the military, where I
11 became a desk chief at CIA, and in 1954 I was asked by Mr. Helms
12 if I would go back to Vietnam, which I did, under the command of
13 then-Colonel Edward G. Lansdale and I was assigned to North
14 Vietnam.

15 I stayed there until the Viet Minh took over in October of
16 1954. I then went to Haiphong, and in 1955 I came to Saigon
17 and at that time, the operation was to establish a viable
18 government in Vietnam, the government of Ngo Dien Diem.

19 I remained until 1956 and in 1956 I asked to be relieved
20 from the CIA so I could return to the military service. I had
21 been up to that time, approximately 13 years as a military man
22 with OSS, SSU, CIG and CIA.

23 I left and I joined the Special Forces in the Army and I
24 served from '56 to '59. In 1959 I was assigned to the Assistant
25 Chief of Staff for Intelligence of the U.S. Army and was sent to

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1 Iran where I served for two years.
2 I retired from the military in 1961 and returned to the
3 CIA. I was sent to Vietnam in 1961 and I remained in Vietnam
4 until August of 1967.

5 I left the CIA in 1968, July the 15th, retired from the
6 CIA and military. I went in private business for a couple of
7 years and in 1971 I worked as a consultant for the White House
8 for approximately four months, four or five months.

9 I then was a consultant to the Bureau of Narcotics and
10 Dangerous Drugs of the Department of Justice and I joined the
11 DEA in 1973 and I am presently working for the DEA.

12 Mr. Kirbow. Directing your attention then to that period
13 after you returned to Vietnam after 1961 to the period beginning
14 in early 1963, would you relate to the Committee your experiences
15 in connection with the build-up and the eventual General's
16 coup and the downfall of the Diem government?

17 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

18 In February of 1962, two Air Force pilots, Vietnamese Air
19 Force pilots, attacked the Presidential Palace of Ngo Dien Diem.
20 This was not the first indication that there was something
21 wrong, because if you will recall in November of 1960 there was
22 another attempted coup.

23 At that time, in February, I was asked if I would go to the
24 different military leaders which I knew and had known in the
25 past to find out what was the political pressure, what was the

16

17

1 temperature, was there really some dissidence within the military
2 ranks, was there really a basis for an uprising against Ngo Dien
3 Nhu
4 Diem.

5 I was unable at that time to determine this fact. There
6 was isolated dissidence within the military structure. This was
7 reported in February or March in 1962.

8 In the meantime, Mr. Colby had assigned me to work with the
9 Minister of the Interior of the Government of Vietnam, and I
10 was responsible to be the liaison between the CIA and the
11 Ministry of the Interior on a program, on a project, which was
12 called Strategic Hamlet Program.

13 This was an idea forwarded by Ngo Dien Nhu, the President's
14 brother and counsellor, to establish security within the
15 hamlets and the villages where people lived so that they could
16 deny access of food, taxes and what have you to the Vietcong.

17 In this position I was able to travel quite extensively
18 because I was under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior
19 and indirectly I worked for the President's brother who was in
20 charge of the program and by travelling I was able to go to
21 every province, I was able to talk to unit commanders down to
22 and including small sections. Some of these people I had known
23 for many years; some of them I had known back even in World War
24 II. Some of them were in powerful positions, and I was able to
25 talk to them on a person to person basis, not as a government
26 official.

1 I did wear a uniform though I was out of the Army when I
2 was in that position because those military commanders who knew
3 me always assumed that I was in the Army and that I was still in
4 the Army. Therefore, it was much easier for me to travel in
5 uniform and special arrangements were made for me to carry an
6 identification card as being an active duty military officer.

7 This was done with the permission of General Harkins, and
8 it was also known to General Westmoreland when General West-
9 moreland took over.

10 In that period, I would say that the country team was
11 attempting to get organized so they could show that they were
12 speaking with one head under Ambassador Nolting, and we had
13 a committee which the military and also '7 agencies, including
14 the CIA, were members, and it was called the Truehart Committee
15 where we jointly made plans to help out the government of
16 Vietnam in different programs, whether they be military programs
17 or USAID type programs, self-help programs, also programs of
18 which to arm the villagers so they could protect themselves.

19 We didn't arm them with modern weapons, we gave them
20 shotguns, .12 gauge shotguns. There were very few modern
21 weapons available for that type of activity.

22 At the same time, we were interested in the Montagnard
23 Program and I did work with the Montagnards -- those are the
24 hill tribes in central Vietnam.

25 We did arm certain elements of the Montagnards, and we did

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1 keep them up and organize them in paramilitary forces, and these
2 forces were eventually turned over completely to the U.S.
3 Army.

4 About -- well, I can say definitely on 7 of May, 1963,
5 the Minister of Interior, myself and his entourage flew to
6 Hue in central Vietnam. While in Hue, it was on my aircraft that
7 I had assigned to me for that day -- while in Hue, they had a
8 very large meeting of different military authorities and at that
9 time I did not realize what was going on.

1 They had met with the President's brother, Ngo Dien Can,
2 who was considered the war lord, in a way, and some decisions
3 were made, of which I was not aware of. We returned quite late
4 the night of the 7th; though I wanted to stay, the Ministry of
5 the Interior told me it would be impossible. I wanted to see
6 the celebration of the birthday of Buddha. I wanted to see
7 the boats with the candles lit going down the perfumed river,
8 but it was not to be.

9 The next day there was an attack by the military forces on
10 the Buddhists. Up to that time, the Buddhists, as an entity,
11 was not a political force and never thought of being, and when
12 the attack on the Buddhists came about, this was, in my estima-
13 tion, one of the turning points in what was happening in Vietnam.

14 It could have been salvaged, but this -- again, I had
15 talked later with the Minister of the Interior and I had talked
16 with Ngo Dien Nhu on several occasions when they were trying to

TOP SECRET

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1 appease the situation. They were trying to meet some demands
2 of the Buddhist leaders. This, unfortunately, did not come
3 about.

4 I did not travel too much during the latter part of May
5 or June, and it was quite evident at that time, to me and to
6 other people who were there that there was a strong anti-American
7 feeling, and also a restriction put on by the government of
8 Vietnam about people associating with Americans.

9 The only time that it broke down was on the 4th of July of
1 1963 when the Ambassador Nolting threw a party for the Indepen-
2 dence Day and it seemed like every military leader and political
3 personality was attending American parties that day.

I received a message to meet with General Don, who was Commander of I CORPS at that time, and it was in a public place, it was in the Caravelle Hotel downstairs where they had sort of a big dining room, a nightclub, and I was present with General Don and his entourage and everybody from the Diem government was in the same place. The place was jam packed.

It was at that time on the 4th of July that I had the first indication that something serious was being contemplated when General Don told me that if the Buddhist situation does not get settled that the military are planning. I reported this fact, and I believe it was around the 8th or 9th of July, that more indications -- on the 11th of July, Ngo Dien Nhu called the Generals together for a staff meeting at the General

TOP SECRET

1 Staff Headquarters and shocked them by telling them that he
2 knew of some coup planning going on by the Generals.

This scared the Generals and other officers, needless to say, that Ngo Dien Nhu would be completely aware that there was some dissidence in the ranks.

6 Nothing happened much before the 20th or 21st of August
7 of 1963. At that time -- I have to go back a little bit.

8 We had had bonzes burning themselves, and we had had local
9 press releases made by Madam Nhu that sometimes were not too
1 well received by the Americans and also antagonized the
11 population.

On the night of the 21st of August, General Ton That Dinh, as Military Governor of Saigon and Commander of the 3rd Corps, had established a curfew. If I recall correctly, the curfew was to start about 7:00 or 8:00 o'clock at night. Anybody seen after that time would be seen -- after that would be shot. And that night, elements -- later on, we didn't know at that time, later on proving to be elements of the Special Forces, which was the praetorian guard of Ngo Dien Nhu and the police dressed in military uniforms attacked the pagodas in Saigon.

Now what was very bad about this, Ambassador Nolting had already been relieved and Ambassador Lodge was on his way to take over. And Ambassador Lodge arrived on the 22nd or 23rd of August. I am not sure exactly of the date.

And he found that Saigon was an armed camp.

1 Now, during this period of these attacks on the pagodas,
2 there had been many contacts made by a lot of people to anybody
3 who would listen to them talking about doing something about
4 doing away with the existing regime. I had talked with the
5 different generals and on the one time in August -- I don't
6 recall if it was the 23rd or 24th -- we received a cable which
7 has later been known as the famous Roger Hillsman cable, which
8 practically gave us the go ahead that this type of thing could
9 not continue.

1 Talking of type of thing, we're talking about the present
2 regime continuing as it was.

1 There was a lot of talk of coups. We had met with
2 Generals on different occasions. I had met with them, other
3 people had also. We had met with Colonels and junior officers.
4 And we anticipated that there would be some type of action taken
5 in the latter part of August.

1 If you will recall, or those of you who don't know, it
2 aborted at that time. It aborted because, one, they did not
3 have necessary forces, I am talking about the coup plotters,
4 did not have the necessary forces to combat those loyal to the
5 Diem government, namely elements of the Marines, elements of
6 the Rangers, the Presidential Guard, and other units, and
7 especially the Special Forces, which were the best-armed troops
8 available.

1 Also, they announced in the press that the CIA was payin-

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1 off or was paying to have a coup. This was a very shrewd and
2 calculating move on any man on the quality of Ngo Dien Nhu
3 who was a shrewd politician and also a master of psychological
4 warfare.

5 During the month of September, there was still more talk
6 of coups and at that time, the month of September, I had been
7 told by Ambassador Lodge that I was to monitor coup planning
8 only. I was not told to -- that I was to convey any messages.
9 I had conveyed messages to Big Minh on two occasions, General
10 Khiem -- K-h-i-e-m -- on one occasion. I had met General
11 Khiem and Big Minh on another occasion.

12 On several occasions I had met General Don and other
13 military leaders.

14 In September, the latter part of September, there had been
15 some reassessment of what had been going on.

16 I will say this, that I worked for Ambassador Lodge. I
17 reported to Ambassador Lodge and I received my instructions
18 from Ambassador Lodge. If they were cabled instructions, he had
19 a very good habit of not reading something. He would fold a
20 piece of paper and what pertained to you for instructions he
21 would let you read that, and that alone so that you didn't
22 know who was sending it or where it came from. He just read
23 that, and he said those are the instructions, do you understand
24 them? Yes, sir: all right, go carry them out.

25 In October -- I'm running over these things in a hurry --

1 in October, the first part of October, I think October the
2 34d or 4th, I was asked to contact Big Minh. I was by myself
3 and I contacted Big Minh at his headquarters.

4 At that time, Big Minh explained to me that they had had,
5 that there was going to be a coup d'etat, that they didn't want
6 this to be an American sponsored coup d'etat, they wanted to be
7 assured of American backing, specifically in the part where it
8 comes to military and economic aid after the coup had been
9 successful.

1 Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, could I interrupt for just
2 a second?

3 Senator Tower. Senator Baker.

4 Senator Baker. It's a terribly fine point, and I don't
5 mean to be critical, but could you elaborate a little bit on
6 what you understood him to mean when he said he did not want
7 it to be an American-sponsored coup d'etat, but he wanted
8 assurances in advance of American economic and military support
9 after a successful coup d'etat.

1 Could you tell me how you make that distinction a little
2 clearer?

3 Mr. Conti. Yes, sir.

4 I had specific instructions from the Ambassador, and all
5 the instructions I received, Senator, before any meeting, I
6 was told exactly what I would say, and if I recall at that
7 time, I was told to go ahead to the meeting, and I have it here

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1 in the paper -- and I hate to rifle through paper, but I could
2 answer it if I could just --

3 Now, what the General meant, he did not want actual U.S.
4 participation in the coup d'etat. He did not want the U.S.
5 government to start the coup d'etat. He also outlined three
6 general ideas, this was the first time that a leader had
7 mentioned the possibility of assassination. This assassinatio
8 was not of Diem. This was -- if they could not do anything, i
9 would be the elimination of Ngo Dien Can who was the war lord
10 in central Vietnam and Ngo Dien Nhu.

11 At that time, General Minh did say that one of the alter-
12 native means was to eliminate Can and Nhu and keep Diem. That
13 was one of the alternatives.

14 Senator Baker. Did they ask you for any support in
15 eliminating either of these people?

16 Mr. Conein. No, sir. I had never, and even right up
17 to the very end, I had never been asked for any resources
18 whatsoever to help or to aid in the elimination of any individ

19 Senator Tower. This was developed in some considerable
20 detail by Mr. Colby this morning and you might be interested
21 in reading the transcript.

22 Mr. Kirbow. I think, having interrupted you, appropriate
23 Mr. Conein, could I ask you too, you have placed, or penne
24 a paper, made a chronology of all of the events immediately
25 preceding and after the coup d'etat.

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1 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

2 Mr. Kirbow. Do you have a copy of that there before you?

3 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

4 Mr. Kirbow. And you have looked at the original, which
5 I hold here?

6 Mr. Conein. Yes, I have it here.

7 Mr. Kirbow. This has been marked, Mr. Chairman, as
8 Conein Exhibit No. 1 and I ask at this time that the entire
9 document, as best evidence of what transpired at the time, be
10 placed in the record for future use by the Committee.

11 Senator Tower. Without objection.

12 (The document referred to was
13 marked as Conein Exhibit No. 1
14 for identification.)

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1 Mr. Kirbow. Please go ahead, Mr. Conein, with your
2 summary.

3 Mr. Conein. To answer your question on this, I have the
4 document. This is my after action report that I wrote after
5 the coup d'etat.

6 In this, it says: "Big Minh did not expect U.S. government
7 support for himself or his colleagues for a coup d'etat but did
8 need U.S. government assurances that U.S. government would not
9 attempt to thwart his plans. Minh stated the need for continu-
10 ation of American military and economic aid at the present
11 level.

12 "Minh outlined three plans under consideration by the Gen-
13 erals: to assassinate Ngo Dien Nhu and Ngo Dien Can and to
14 keep President Diem in office. Two, have the military units
15 go into dissiden~~ce~~ against the government of Vietnam, encircle
16 and isolate Saigon. Three, direct military action against the
17 military units in Saigon."

18 Mr. Kirbow. Thank you.

19 Would you go ahead with your summary, please?

20 Mr. Conein. Under instructions of the Ambassador, I
21 accelerated my contacts in monitoring Hué and reported back
22 all times exactly what the conversations were. Sometimes I had
23 as many as two or three meetings. Primarily my meetings were
24 with General Don, who was the organizer in his position of
25 getting the commanders of different military units committed

1 to the coup.

2 You must understand also, gentlemen, that there were not
3 one coup plan. There were several. The problem that was facing
4 the people who were making assessments of this was which one
5 had the most likely chance of succeeding? We were at the point
6 of no return. There was no chance of pulling back, because
7 there was going to be a coup. The best thing to do was to
8 monitor and keep the U.S. government advised of who the principal
9 players were and what their intentions were then and in the
10 future.

11 It was an impossible situation, and also during this time
12 when it was getting down to the critical element in October, they
13 had to have assurances, the Generals had to have assurances,
14 that I was speaking for the Ambassador. Several attempts were
15 made to get these assurances, and it was practically impossible
16 because of security around the Generals, who were already
17 suspect, it was almost impossible for anybody to approach them
18 at a reception, although they had intended to do this.

19 So it was arranged that the Ambassador did give the
20 proper assurances that I was speaking for him and that I was
21 acting upon his orders.

22 Mr. Kirbow. Now that was done about the 17th of October?

23 Mr. Conein. The 17th, 20th -- it was in the middle of
24 October it was assured that I was speaking for them, for the
25 Ambassador, and that I was carrying out his instructions.

1 Mr. Kirbow. Could I call your attention to an entry in
2 that document that we discussed of 12 October where you --
3 on page 5 and ask you to elaborate for the Committee about
4 this reference to Secretary McNamara?

5 Mr. Conein. Yes.

6 Here it says that: "Captain Nguyen Quang Nguyen, Chief
7 of Operations, Armor Command, stated he was contacted by two
8 different coup groups during the week of 5-12 October; the second
9 coup group was headed by Lt. Colonel Pham Ngoc Thao" --
10 Pham Ngo Thao was an officer, extremely capable, extremely
11 brilliant. Unfortunately, he was killed later, about a year
12 and a half after the coup. He was working with the Chief of
13 the Secret Police, Dr. Tran Khiem Tuyen, T u-y-e-n. Dr.
14 Tuyen was the head of the President Diem's Secret Police, the
15 civilian part of the Secret Police, and had been so since
16 1955, but right at the time of the coup d'etat, Ngo Diem Nhu
17 became highly suspicious of him and had appointed him as
18 Consul General in Cairo and therefore Dr. Tuyen's group, it
19 was also an important group, was left over to Colonel Tau,
20 and Colonel Tau was trying to hold together a group of dissident
21 individuals who were also making their plans based upon the
22 direction of Dr. Tuyen who unfortunately never got to Cairo,
23 but he did get as far as Hong Kong and stayed there.

24 So there were different elements contacting the same
25 group.

1 It was absolutely necessary in the coup that the Armor was
2 in. It was necessary that the Airborne was in. It was
3 necessary that the proper military units, it was also necessary
4 that the Air Force was in.

Now, the opposition forces were the Praetorian Guards, the Special Forces, and the Palace Guards, very well-equipped and extremely well-armed and they were in Saigon. This was the danger, because to make a confrontation directly in that city would have blown the hell out of the city the way these people shoot, I'm sorry to say. You have to have a truck of ammunition for each rifle that they shoot.

Mr. Kirbow. During this period of October or about that time, were you aware of the requests that were being made on the Ambassador and the Chief of Station to attempt to obtain detailed plans of the coup from --

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Mr. Kirbow. Were you instructed to take care of that?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

The request that had been made -- I assumed, I learned later on, I learned later on that they were being made by Washington, I learned that they were made by Washington -- was to have complete detail of the military plan, the political plan and their ideas for the future.

When I was talking at meetings -- now, I didn't go to meetings like here, gentlemen; I had to sneak around and meet

1 in a dentist's office and even had to have some work done on
2 my teeth so that they could see that I had reason -- I mean,
3 that's an example. I had to sneak around, as I had a very high
4 profile in Vietnam, sort of cover my tracks of why I was meeting
5 and talking to these different individuals.

6 And I was told to try to procure these plans. I was
7 promised these plans, and they had a coup committee, and I
8 learned afterwards, I didn't know it at the time, that there
9 was already dissidence within the coup group, the people who
10 were going to pull the coup, and one General didn't like the
11 other General. The best way I can describe it, if you had
12 three Vietnamese Generals sitting and talking to you, one
13 General would walk out of the room to go to the john, two of
14 them would tell you, don't trust that one and finally the one
15 who would outwait the other two and there would be one left,
16 and he would say, don't trust those two. So it was a very
17 difficult situation, gentlemen. It was not one of these things
18 that you think just ran along very smoothly.

19 It looks good in a report, but the frustrations of trying
20 to get the man to give you the things that he had promised
21 to you, to try to deal with different personalities through one
22 man or two men, to get, was practically impossible.

23 In the latter part of October, as I say, I think that the
24 people back here in Washington figured out that I was being
25 set up for a patsy and there was a possibility that it would be

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1 highly embarrassing for the United States government in case
2 that it was found out that I had been set up as a patsy. They
3 made a recommendation that somebody more senior to me and with
4 extensive military backgrounds should take over from me.

5 Senator Baker. Well, Mr. Chairman, why -- maybe this was
6 covered earlier -- but why did you say you were being set
7 up?

8 Mr. Conein. No, somebody back here.

9 Senator Schweiker. Why?

10 Mr. Conein. Why? Because they couldn't understand why
11 I was getting all of the information. Obviously, if I'm getting
12 this information of when we're going to plan and what is going
13 to happen, what units are going to be, obviously somebody is
14 setting me up for a patsy and would blame the United States
15 government.

16 Senator Baker. Who made that determination?

17 Mr. Conein. The people back here thought I was being set
18 up for a patsy, so they sent a message to the Ambassador and
19 recommended that a very capable officer and a personal friend
20 of mine, General Dick Stillwell, would take over instead of
21 me. But when this was brought up to General Don and the coup
22 members, they said, no, we trust Conein, we don't want anybody
23 else. So I continued.

24 There was a plan to transfer me at the last moment. I wish
25 they had. I wouldn't be here today, there would be somebody

TOP SECRET

32

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1 Senator Baker. I have a cable to Saigon from McGeorge
2 Bundy to Lodge, I guess it is 24 October. It says: "Eyes
3 only to Lodge and Harkins from Bundy. There may be danger.
4 Who attempting entrapment through Don's approaches to Conein.
5 Feel quite strongly that Lodge and Harkins can stand back from
6 any nonessential involvement. It seems wise to maintain close
7 control over meetings between Don and Conein."

8 Is that the message that activated the disengagement?

9 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

10 Senator Schweiker. Was the other telegram we heard this
11 morning related to this at all, or was that a different time
12 sequence, whereby we were warned that we wanted to have nothing
13 to do with anything that smacked of assassination?

14 Mr. Schwarz. That is right in the same time period.

15 Senator Schweiker. Was that part of the patsy concern?

16 Mr. Conein. Oh, you're talking about that, on the 5th of
17 October, sir, or on the 4th. There is one thing that you
18 misunderstand. There might be a twenty-four hour difference
19 because we cross the international dateline, so I might say
20 the 3rd and it would be the 4th.

21 Senator Schweiker. How does that wire fit into what we
22 are talking about?

23 Mr. Conein. All right, on the 5th of October meeting
24 between myself and General Big Minh, Duong Van Minh, at his
25 headquarters, at this point, Minh stated, and I read this over,

TOP SECRET

1 and outlined three plans under consideration by the Generals
2 to assassinate Ngo Dien Nhu and Ngo Dien Can and to keep
3 President Diem in office.

4 When I reported this to the Ambassador, we had at that
5 time an Acting Chief of Station by the name of [REDACTED] He,
6 on his own, talked to the Ambassador and made a reference that
7 we should not -- I didn't know this, but that we should not
8 eliminate the possibility of the assassination of Ngo Dien Can
9 and Ngo Dien Nhu, that this might preclude bloodshed in Saigon.

10 He was, if I recall properly, quite severely reprimanded
11 by then-Director John McCone.

12 Senator Schweiker. Well, McCone wired --

13 Senator Tower. That is what triggered the Colby wire back
14 there, or McCone, which Colby actually sent.

15 Mr. Schwarz. Are you testifying now from your review of
16 the documents, or from what you knew at the time?

17 Mr. Conein. I am testifying from a review of my after
18 action report.

19 Mr. Schwarz. But your after action report does not mention
20 the McCone cable.

21 Mr. Conein. No. In my after action report there were a
22 lot of things left out. It would have to be a book, sir.

23 Mr. Schwarz. At the time, did you know of the McCone
24 cable?

25 Mr. Conein. I did not know, sir.

TOP SECRET

34

1 Mr. Schwarz. The substance of it was not transmitted to
2 you either?

3 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

4 Mr. Schwarz. So to make that perfectly clear on the
5 record --

6 Senator Schweiker. The substance of it was not?

7 Mr. Conein. The substance of my stating the options, that
8 I knew.

9 Mr. Schwarz. You knew that had been communicated to us?

10 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

11 Senator Schweiker. But you did not know what option had
12 been eliminated?

13 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

14 Mr. Schwarz. You were not told?

15 Senator Schweiker. And yet you were the key guy in the
16 coup?

17 Mr. Conein. I was not told at that point. I was told
18 later on about assassinations. I can't recall if it was around
19 the 20th of October or when.

20 Mr. Schwarz. You were told by whom?

21 Senator Schweiker. What by whom?

22 Mr. Conein. By Ambassador Lodge that we would not tolerate
23 or would not condone any assassination.

24 Senator Schweiker. Was that within the same timeframe?

25 Mr. Conein. That was within a two-week timeframe, yes, sir.

TOP SECRET

1 Senator Schweiker. And they were your instructions then?

2 Mr. Conein. They were my instructions then, sir.

3 Mr. Schwarz. How did he convey that to you? Did he do it
4 by showing you a cable, or orally, or what fashion?

5 Mr. Conein. No, he told this to me on a subsequent meeting
6 that I had with the Generals, sir.

7 Mr. Schwarz. Did he instruct you to tell the Generals
8 that the United States opposed assassination?

9 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

10 Senator Schweiker. And did you?

11 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

12 Senator Schweiker. And what was their reaction to that?

13 Mr. Conein. The reaction was just, okay.

14 We're not talking now about a businesslike way of doing
15 things. All right, you don't want it like that? Well, we'll
16 do it our own way anyway. They didn't say that, you know.

17 Senator Schweiker. That's what you got?

18 Mr. Conein. They conveyed it, all right, you don't like it,
19 we won't talk about it anymore.

20 Mr. Schwarz. Does your after action report say that you
21 passed that message on to Big Minh?

22 Mr. Conein. I don't recall -- no, it doesn't. I think
23 that -- all right, the report -- I did not pass it to Big Minh,
24 I passed it to Don.

25 Mr. Schwarz. Does your after action report say that?

1 Mr. Conein. No, it does not.

2 Mr. Schwarz. Does your action report describe the meeting
3 which you had with Don in which you say that you did pass it
4 to him?

5 Mr. Conein. It describes a meeting which I had with Don
6 which I believe was on the 24th in which this was brought up.
7 It was in the airport at 8:00 o'clock in the morning which
8 confirmed that General Harkins had been informed -- had told
9 General Don or told the Generals, I don't know which one he
1 had told, that they would not support the coup and Don told
2 me that all plans were complete and had been checked and
3 rechecked, and it was at this point that I said, you know, they
4 don't go for this knocking off.

5 Mr. Schwarz. Well, the action report has about twenty-five
6 lines on that meeting?

7 Mr. Conein. No, sir, it has about fifteen.

8 Mr. Schwarz. Page 7, are we looking at the same --

9 Mr. Conein. We are looking now at page 6. It was at
1 that point.

2a Now the second meeting of that day was when I was pressuring
3 General Don, I was more interested in the political plans than
4 I was of the actual goings on. This was a request that had
5 been levied on me by Washington, and what I wanted to do more
6 than anything else is get before it happened what their political
7 plans were.

1 Mr. Kirbow. Mr. Conein, is there any doubt in your mind
2 that you in some way, conveyed to either Don or Big Minh the
3 Ambassador's position regarding assassination?

4 Mr. Conein. Oh, I conveyed it to Don that they didn't go
5 for it. That is all.

6 Mr. Schwarz. Why didn't you put that in the action report
7 which you made up in 1963?

8 Mr. Conein. I never thought I'd come up here, sir, I'll
9 tell you truthfully. I never thought I'd come up here and be
10 asked that specific question, so there are some things left
11 out of my after action report, such as when we drank beer
12 together or something like that. I left a few things out.

13 But this -- I never thought I would be here answering that
14 specific question. If I had known that then, I assure you it
15 would have been in there in capital letters.

16 Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, can I ask one general ques-
17 tion?

18 Senator Tower. Senator Baker.

19 Senator Baker. I apologize, I am sure that this must
20 have been covered in previous testimony, but Mr. Conein, what
21 did you conceive your job to be in Vietnam at this time?

22 Mr. Conein. My job was to convey the orders from my
23 Ambassador and the instructions from my Ambassador to the
24 people who were planning the coup, to monitor those individuals
25 who were planning the coup, to get as much information so that

38

1 our government would not be caught with their pants down.

2 Senator Baker. Did you, in fact, agree not to thwart
3 the coup and in fact to supply economic and military assistance
4 if the coup succeeded?

5 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, I did.

6 Senator Huddleston. May I expand on that just a moment?

7 Senator Tower. Senator Huddleston?

8 Senator Huddleston. Did you conceive your objective to
9 be to encourage or promote the coup?

19. Mr. Conein. No, sir.

11 Senator Baker. Did you conceive it to be to promote a
11 coup but to preserve deniability?

17 Mr. Conein. No, sir. I did not see that I was to promote
18 a coup. The coup was going to happen.

Senator Huddleston. You were just an observer?

Mr. Conein. I was an observer and I was a liaison between my government and the people who were plotting the coup.

Senator Mondale. Did you discuss the possibility of
discouraging the coup?

"Mr. Conant, No, sir.

Senator Neadale. Why?

Mr. Conein. Because in the monitoring of an incident, if you start in a negative -- I did not, for example, encourage them nor did I discourage them in the sense of answering your question, sir. But I did not go in and say, oh, I think

39

1 this is bad, oh, I think this is awful on everything that they
2 said, because I would then be cut off and be blinded.

3 Senator Mondale. I understand that, but when you met with
4 them as you did --

5 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

6 Senator Mondale. -- when you assured them that were there
7 a coup they would be assured of support, were you not in fact
8 encouraging the coup even though you say you were neutral, but
9 if you do it, these things will happen?

10 Senator Schweiker. Senator Mondale, you missed -- there
11 was a wire this morning clearly establishing the State Depart-
12 ment passed on instructions to go ahead and have a coup, and
13 that was the order of the day.

14 Senator Tower. I think to clarify this --

15 Senator Mondale. Is that the Hillsman --

16 Senator Schweiker. The Hyannis Port wire.

17 Senator Mondale. May I look at that wire?

18 Senator Schweiker. Just show it to Senator Mondale, that's
19 all.

20 Senator Tower. What was brought out this morning was that
21 the CIA and DOD took an official position in opposition to
22 topple Diem, but the State Department took a contrary view that
23 Diem had to go and their function in carrying out national
24 policy was to inform them.

25 Incidentally, we had lifted PL 480, the

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1 commercial import program to show our displeasure at the Diem
2 government. What they were doing was telling the plotters that
3 if they were successful that this would be restored.

4 Is this essentially correct, Mr. Conein?

5 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

6 Sir, when I did receive the information on the 24th or 26th,
7 I forgot the date, August, which was the famous Hillsman
8 cable, I conveyed the points of that message to the coup
9 plotters. I did not take those back at all during any time.

10 Senator Huddleston. One other question that Mr. Colby
11 answered this morning, but I'd like your opinion, if there had
12 been no interest in the United States in deposing Diem, would
13 there have been a coup?

14 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

15 Senator Huddleston. You think they were going ahead?

16 Mr. Conein. I think there would have been, sir. The
17 catalyst that started that was what happened between the
18 Buddhists --

19 Senator Schweiker. Who started the Buddhist thing?

20 Which --

21 Mr. Conein. The Diem government.

22 Senator Schweiker. And why, knowing what you assessed,
23 which was they were a neutral element and all of a sudden
24 they're antagonistic politically, why did they do it?

25 Mr. Conein. This I never could understand. I was up there

41

1 the day before. Now you're asking for my opinion.

2 My opinion was that they had a chance to get out of it
3 and get out of it very gracefully within the first two weeks
4 after the 8th of May incident in Hue by meeting the demands of
5 paying off the families of those people who were killed when
6 the military attacked the pagodas in Hue. If this would have
7 been done, I think that we would have been much better off.

8 Again, this is my personal opinion.

9 Senator Schweiker. If I can interrupt for one more
10 minute --

11 Senator Huddleston. Go right ahead.

12 Senator Schweiker. You said that you thought this was a
13 key, did I understand, sort of the turning point of the war?

14 Mr. Conein. No, sir. This was the turning point of the
15 political situation, sir.

16 Senator Schweiker. I see.

17 Mr. Conein. Not the war.

18 Senator Schweiker. But it could have subsequently affected
19 the outcome of the war by messing up the stability of the
20 political establishment, is that right?

21 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

22 Senator Schweiker. Thank you.

23 Senator Huddleston. You mentioned that Madam Nhu had been
24 making some inflammatory statements that were unsettling to the
25 people. Were you referring to the people of Vietnam or the

42

1 People of the United States?

2 I recall some very anti-Buddhist statements that she was
3 making, something to the effect, why not let them burn
4 themselves up, or whatever?

5 Mr. Conein. Yes.

6 Senator Huddleston. Very unsympathetic.

7 Mr. Conein. Very unsympathetic. This upsets -- the reasons
8 being, the Buddhists are not --9 Senator Huddleston. Are you referring to the Vietnamese
10 people?

11 Mr. Conein. I am referring to the Vietnamese people.

12 The people themselves, they claim to be 80 percent Buddhist.

13 What happened, people who had never gone to a pagoda after
14 she started making statements to the effect that she'd like to
15 furnish some mustard at a bonzes barbecue, or something to
16 that effect, this made people want to identify themselves
17 against the regime and so they would go.18 Senator Huddleston. And this was the principal reason that
19 the United States felt that they had to get rid of the regime,
20 or one of the reasons?21 Mr. Conein. Oh, I don't know what we were thinking back
22 here. I was out there. But it was an intolerable situation
23 where you had a President who had a Catholic regime and I
24 happen to be Catholic myself, sir, but who were being oppressive
25 against another religious group in the middle of a war.

Senator Huddleston. And you think that was the catalyst
that got the coup started?

Mr. Conain. This was the action I think was the catalyst that brought down the Diem regime.

Mr. Kirbow. Mr. Conein, was it the general opinion among you and your associates in the Agency and the State Department officials there, the country team, so to speak, that the true power in the government at that time was the brother and his wife or the two brothers and not Diem?

Mr. Conein. Well, yes, sir. What had happened was, it was becoming obvious to those people who were keeping abreast of the situation, not only within the State Department, but also within USAID and JUSPOW and other government entities out there that Diem had been out of touch with reality and was not getting the true facts, that everything was being channeled through his brother Nhu. The control of the Republican Youths, which was based on the Hitlerian Youths, with nice blue uniforms, Madam Nhu was the Chief of the Woman's Solidarity Movement, they had the Female Republican Youths, they controlled the civil guards, they controlled the praetorian guards, the Special Forces, they controlled a vast Secret Police mechanism and all of this, including the police, was all under one man's control. This was Ngo Dinh Nhu.

In central Vietnam, Ngo Dien Can, the brother of Ngo Dinh
Diem, was the actual war lord and nothing happened up there

44

1 without his personal approval.

2 So what you had, you had a Catholic regime superimposed
3 and running all of the political, economic and military entities
4 in the nation and then suppressing what, quote/unquote, was
5 considered the majority religious group in the country.

6 Senator Schweiker. The Buddhists?

7 Mr. Conein. The Buddhists.

8 Senator Tower. Weren't the Buddhists themselves fraction-
9 alized?

10 Mr. Conein. Sir?

11 Senator Tower. Weren't there two or three different
12 principal sects of the Buddhists?

13 Mr. Conein. Oh, there were many principal sects of the
14 Buddhists. There were three or four different sects, of
15 course.

16 Senator Tower. Was this just one sect they were dealing
17 with, or all of them?

18 Mr. Conein. Once this happened that there was an attack
19 on the pagodas in Hue and followed up by an attack in August
20 on the pagodas in Saigon, this consolidated all the factions
21 of the Buddhists, so they became a political entity which they
22 had never been before.

23 Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, we have a vote in progress.

24 Senator Mondale. Can I ask one question?

25 Your background in Vietnam went back many years. You knew

1 many of these later leaders, Generals, you were working with
2 much earlier in their careers.

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Mondale. And you spoke Vietnamese?

5 Mr. Conein. I spoke it very badly, but I spoke it. I
6 spoke French fluently.

7 Senator Mondale. But you were picked, I gather, for this
8 liaison work because of this unique, longstanding personal
9 relationship with these people.

10 Mr. Conein. I assume so. I hope things work that way,
11 Senator.

12 Senator Mondale. Well, that was the idea, and then you
13 met with them frequently?

14 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

15 Senator Mondale. And during those occasions when they
16 were discussing their feelings about Diem and those around him
17 and the need for change, the coup and so on, did they bring
18 up assassinations as a possibility?

19 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

20 Senator Mondale. They never did that?

21 Mr. Conein. The only time that assassination was brought
22 up was at the meeting I had with Big Minh as one of the options
23 that he was considering, in October of 1963.

24 Senator Mondale. Was that the one where he was considering
25 Nhu and someone else?

TOP SECRET

46

47

1 Mr. Conein. Yes. . .

2 Senator Mondale. But not Diem?

3 Mr. Conein. Not Diem, yes, sir.

4 Senator Mondale. But they never once suggested assassina-
5 tion of Diem while you were there?

6 Mr. Conein. No, sir, not at that time.

7 Senator Tower. Gentlemen, why don't we suspend and all go
8 vote and come back?

9 (A brief recess was taken at 3:26 p.m.)

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1 Senator Tower. Let me suggest to the Committee that we
2 allow Mr. Conein to proceed with his summary and then, before
3 we ask questions, because I think some of the questions might
4 be in that summary and it might allow us to get through our
5 business in a little more orderly fashion.

6 So if you would proceed, Mr. Conein.

7 Mr. Conein. Thank you, sir.

8 In the latter part of October, specifically the 28th of
9 October, I was informed by General Don to convey to the
10 Ambassador, Ambassador Lodge, that they were ready to have a
11 coup and that one, that I was to stay home and await further
12 orders, that the coup would be accomplished before the 2nd
13 of November.

14 At that time, Ambassador Lodge was preparing to return
15 to the United States for consultation with the President of
16 the United States. Ambassador Lodge made that known to me that
17 he was coming back to the United States.

18 General Don requested that I convey to the Ambassador that
19 he do not change his plans to leave on the 31st of October to
20 come back for consultation to the United States because if he
21 did change his plans that this might be a signal to the President
22 and Nhu that something was going on.

23 I don't know why, but the plans were changed and Admiral
24 Felt, CINCPAC Commander, came to Vietnam and landed and had an
25 interview with the President that morning, the day that the coup

53

1 was going, or coming off.

2 The coup started I believe here on the 31st. It was the
3 1st of November in Saigon. At approximately noon on the
4 1st of November, I received an emissary telling me that I am to
5 move. I was changing into uniform when the second emissary came
6 and said that I was to proceed immediately per previously
7 arranged plans to the Joint General Staff Headquarters.

8 I had at that time a military jeep, a Vietnamese driver,
9 two radio sets, a bag, an extra-large briefcase, and I was
10 armed with a .38 revolver. This was for my own personal
11 protection because it was a short-nosed revolver, and you
12 couldn't hit anything further than two feet away from you.

13 My driver, who was a Vietnamese sergeant who had been
14 detailed to me by the military, was armed with a .45.

15 We proceeded from my residence and about 1:00 o'clock in
16 the afternoon and on the way to -- or the moment I got the
17 signal that the coup was on, I got onto my radio sets and
18 alerted the Embassy through a voice code which I had and another
19 voice code which had been prearranged, to let them know I was
20 safe.

21 I proceeded to the General Staff Headquarters, and there
22 was firing going on between the Special Forces unit that was
23 right next to the General Staff Headquarters and some of the
24 elements, the troop elements, at the General Staff Headquarters.

25 I arrived at the General Staff Headquarters approximately

54

1 3:30 in the afternoon. The coup was then on.

2 At the General Staff Headquarters there was General Big
3 Minh, General Little Minh, General Don, General Khiem, General
4 Le Van Kim, Colonel Lam -- well, a lot of military officers.
5 Most of them were of the General Staff and no unit commanders
6 themselves.

7 Upon arrival I was with the Generals and they told me,
8 Big Minh told me that they only had a couple of officers that
9 they were in doubt of who had not committed themselves yet, but
10 that it was in progress. They started the attack and it kept
11 on going about 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon -- I have it here
12 in my notes, but I'm trying to recall it without referring to
13 my notes -- our first call came in, maybe 3:00 or 4:00 o'clock
14 in the afternoon, when they called President Diem and asked
15 him to surrender and if he would surrender that they would give
16 him sanctuary and allow him to escape from the country.

17 This was refused.

18 About the same time or a little afterwards, there was the
19 communications between Ambassador Lodge and President Diem. I
20 was in both radio and telephonic contact with the Embassy and
21 keeping them posted of the units, the personalities and what
22 was transpiring. I was to convey one of the first messages I
23 was to convey was that they did not want any U.S. military
24 officer or advisor with any of the attacking units. They did
25 not want any American participation within the coup.

1 They automatically closed down the airport as they always
2 do in a coup and proceeded to attack the Central Police
3 Headquarters, take over the radio station, and get into the
4 PTT which controlled the communications.

5 This was very unfortunate, because when they did this --
6 prior to the coup they had taken out the, I don't know, the
7 telephone terminals and in the process, instead of leaving my
8 telephone into my home open they had disconnected it. They
9 would only leave the Embassy lines open so therefore I was not
10 warned until practically the last minute to proceed. They had
11 been trying to get ahold of me since about an hour before they
12 finally got in contact with me.

And the coup, different units or different elements, had committed themselves and had progressed. We were not sure till about 1:00 o'clock the following morning that the coup had been successful. At that time, it became quite obvious. There had been three or four communications between President Diem, Ngo Dien Nhu, with the General Officers, each time Diem refused to speak to Big Minh.

And on several occasions I would warn the Embassy that certain shellings were going to take place, or bombings by aircraft was going to take place at a certain time, to alert American personnel who might be living around the area to watch out or stay under cover because they were firing 105's in the center of the city.

1 We had no American casualty, wounded or killed, during this
2 coup. I am talking from the American side, now. The Vietnamese
3 suffered about 100 dead.

4 At about 6:00 o'clock the following morning -- this is the
5 part where it gets to the point where what we are discussing is
6 most important -- about 6:00 o'clock in the morning just as dawn
7 was coming up, all of the officers that were in the coup and some
8 hangers on who, I don't know how they got there, they were all
9 standing out, including myself, we were standing out on the patio
10 of the Joint General Staff Headquarters. At that time, there
11 had been some discussion going on among the Generals and
12 Colonals who were there about what they were going to do now.

13 I only heard of one officer who was quite adamant about
14 the elimination of President Diem at that time. This officer,
15 who is now dead, a General by the name of Le, L-e, who was a
16 former Chief of Police under Diem in 1955 or '56. He was for
17 the killing of Diem.

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18 At about 6:40 or 6:30 or 6:40, a telephone call came in
19 from Diem. We still assumed that Diem was at Gialong Palace --
20 G-a-i-l-o-n-g. And it was at this point that Diem talked to
21 Big Minh for the first time.

22 He asked for full honors if -- he wanted to capitulate,
23 but he wanted to have full honors. Big Minh replied to the
24 President that he could not guarantee full honors, if and
25 during the time that Vietnamese were still killing one another.

1 Diem, something to the effect, said that he would order
2 Cease fire at the Palace. My recollection is it was about 10
3 minutes to 7:00, maybe 10 minutes to 8:00. Now I had been up
4 all night long, I had been working with this for a long time,
5 so I can't say the time exactly, but it was around that time.

6 There was a cease fire and the people quit firing. At this
7 stage, there were four armored cars and 113's as escort of
8 military police proceeded immediately from the Joint General
9 Staff Headquarters toward Gailong Palace. Big Minh, with his
10 aide, Captain Nhung, got into a sedan and with MTS Corps went
11 out the back road from the General Staff Headquarters toward
12 the back of the golf course and took a different road from the
13 armored cars that went down Cong Le.

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The armored column was commanded by a Major Bang -- B-a-n-
g -- who had been a former Province Chief at Da Lac Province.

They proceeded to the Palace and they started searching
the place. About an hour later -- and this is the part that is
important -- when Big Minh left, General Don and General Khiem
and Le Van Kim were still at the General Staff Headquarters; so
was I. At this point, they proceeded to take the pictures of
Diem down, cover the statue that was out in front of the General
Staff Headquarters and they took all telephone lines out and
reverted to radio communication, and I would like to put one
thing into place. Between the telephone call at 6:10 or 6:20
in the morning and the second telephone call which came at 10

1 minutes to 7:00 from Diem, I was asked by Big Minh and Don to
2 get an aircraft. I called the Embassy -- I still had telephone
3 communication -- I called the Embassy and I spoke to Mr. [REDACTED]
4 [REDACTED] who was then Acting Chief of Station and who had been up
5 all night also. And I told them that it looked like Diem and
6 Nhu were going to surrender and that I needed an aircraft.

7 I was reminded that the United States government had no
8 intention of immediately recognizing the new regime, or the
9 junta; secondly, that President Diem would be taken to the
1 first country that offered him asylum; thirdly, that they did
1 not want the aircraft to land in a country other than the
1 country that was going to give asylum. For example, and I am
1 just setting this as an example, assume that France was the
1 first country to grant President Diem asylum. They did not want
1 an aircraft that would have to land, say in Delhi, or Carachi
1 or Teiran or anyplace else where Diem would get out and start
1 forming a government in exile.

1 Senator Baker. Was there any airplane that would fly that
1 far?

1 Mr. Conain. Yes, sir. We had C-130's. They could not
1 fly that far. We had KC-135's, and I was told that they could
1 not get an aircraft for twenty-four hours, therefore it was up
1 and the nearest KC-135 was in Guam, and they could not get an
1 aircraft for twenty-four hours.

1 I informed both General Minh and General Don that I could
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1 not get an aircraft for twenty-four hours, and -- so when Big
2 Minh had gone, General Don was preparing for the reception of
3 the President and his brother. We started -- I wasn't doing it,
4 but we got troops in and we cleaned up the whole area, policed
5 it out and brought in a large table with green felt on it and
6 they were preparing to call in the Press so that they would have
7 coverage of Diem resigning.

8 Vice President Tho -- T-h-o -- was to be the new Premier
9 of the government and he was to accept the resignation and he
10 would then become the head of the government.

11 The thing, the most important fact that they were afraid
12 of was that they would not be accepted to other governments,
13 would not be recognized, so they wanted a legal transition.
14 Also, they prepared to house both Diem and Nhu in the General
15 Staff Headquarters under proper security. That was the way it
16 was at the time I departed, when they said -- General Don told
17 me they were bringing in the Press and I saw movie cameras and
18 everything coming in, and I said this is the time for me to get
19 out, and I went home.

20 I got home, by then my telephone was re-established and I
21 got a telephone call, come to the Embassy. I went to the
22 Embassy and I was informed that I had to find Diem. I was tired
23 and fed up and I said, who gave those orders. They let me know
24 that those orders came from the President of the United States.
25 So I went back out to the General Staff Headquarters.

1 getting there about 10:15, 10:30 in the morning. In the meantime,
2 they had moved the group from the General Staff Headquarters to
3 the office upstairs and the Officer's Club at the General Staff
4 Headquarters which was right off of the entrance to the General
5 Staff Headquarters.

6 The Ministers of the former government were all, except
7 one, present and had turned over to the junta, and they were in
8 the process of being talked to and the questioning them and what
9 have you. I walked in and I saw General Big Minh -- I saw all
1 the Generals, everybody else, but I saw General Big Minh's aide,
2 because General Big Minh and La Van Kim were talking to Minis-
3 ters, to former Ministers of the government.

4 I told the aide that I wanted to talk to Big Minh and he
5 said, what it is about, and I said I wanted to know where Diem
6 was. Big Minh came over and I explained to him that it was
7 important to the United States government to know the location
8 of President Diem. Big Minh told me they committed suicide.

9 I looked at him, and I said, where. He said they were in
1 the Catholic Church at Cho Long, and they committed suicide.

2 I think I lost my cool at that point, because I think I
3 told Big Minh, look, you're a Buddhist, I'm a Catholic. If you
4 committed suicide at that church and the priest holds Mass
5 tonight, that story won't hold water. I said, where are they.

6 He said they are at the General Staff Headquarters, behin
7 the General Staff Headquarters, did I want to see them. And I

1 said no. He said, why not? And I said, well, if by chance one
2 of a million of the people believe you that they committed
3 suicide in Church and I see that they have not committed suicide
4 and I know differently, then if it ever leaks out, I am in
5 trouble. I refused to be a witness to it.

6 They had been killed.

7 I returned to the Embassy and so reported and a message
8 was sent back to Washington immediately that they were dead,
9 that they were at the General Staff Headquarters.

10 Mr. Kirbow. Excuse me, Mr. Conein. Did you report that
11 they had committed suicide as they had told you at the Embassy
12 or did you report what you actually knew?

13 Mr. Conein. I reported exactly was I said, that I was
14 told that they committed suicide but I refused to witness how
15 they had died, because I didn't want to get myself involved
16 in their death, period.

17 Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, I'm not quite sure how you
18 can confirm or deny how they could have committed suicide in
19 the church if their bodies were at the General Staff Head-
20 quarters?

21 Mr. Conein. Well according to the original story that they
22 gave out that they both committed suicide in the church --

23 Senator Baker. How could you have told or not told by
24 looking at the bodies? What difference would it have made?

25 Mr. Conein. I know the Vietnamese well enough, Senator,

1 that they leave a lot of marks on people.

2 Senator Baker. So you don't have any doubt in your mind?

3 Mr. Conein. Oh, no, sir.

4 Mr. Kirbow. Did you later see the pictures of the body?

5 Mr. Conein. I saw the pictures in, I think, a few days

6 afterwards. I saw the pictures of it and then there were the

7 pictures of it being handed around.

8 Senator Mondale. Did they tell you that they had taken
9 poison?

1 Mr. Conein. Well, no, they just told me that they had
2 committed suicide. I didn't want to delve into it.

3 Mr. Kirbow. Would you tell the committee the nature of the
4 apparent deaths from the photographs?

5 Mr. Conein. Oh, yes. Diem had been shot and he had a
6 bloody face and his head was turned over to one side and it was
7 obvious that his hands had been tied behind his back.

8 Ngo Diem Nhu had multiple wounds and also you could tell
9 that he had been stabbed many times, besides being shot. You
could tell, and by the running of the blood.

1 Mr. Kirbow. Did you later determine in some manner to your
2 own knowledge how the deaths actually occurred?

3 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

4 Mr. Kirbow. Would you tell the Committee?

5 Mr. Conein. This is something I swore I would never tell.

6 It appeared, first of all, when Diem and Nhu were going to

1 make confessions at the church, they were using a telephone line
2 which they could contact, through the Palace switchboard, so it
3 would appear that they were still in the Palace and someone, I
4 don't know who, reported where they were.

5 Senator Tower. So they were actually in the church at
6 Cho Long?

7 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, they were in the church. As you
8 go in -- you don't know it, but Ngo Dien Nhu was a chain smoker,
9 continuously smoking, and he was out in the yard, the little
10 courtyard they have around the church, and he was walking around
11 and he and his brother were walking back and forth, they had
12 one aide with them.

13 Mr. Schwarz. Not in custody of the Generals?

14 Mr. Conein. Not in touch with the Generals, but somebody
15 reported it.

16 First of all, you must understand -- now this is specula-
17 tion on my part now; I'm not saying how it happened, because I
18 don't know how this part happened in fact, but they had so many
19 pictures of Diem hung up on public buildings and in every office
20 and his picture was all over, like Ho Chi Minh's picture was
21 all over Saigon now, it was all over, so therefore, he was very
22 well known, plus people had seen him, they know him, so it wasn't
23 very difficult for anybody to spot him and make a report.

24 General Mai Huu Kuan and then-Colonel, later General,
25 Duong Ngoc Lam took off with armored cars and went to the church

1 There is a little bit of difference of opinion as to exactly
2 what happened, as exactly what happened at the church.

1 Mai Huu Xuan reported to the President, saluted and told
2 him to get into the armored car. Ngo Dien Nhu protested and
5 asked for a sedan, and this led to an argument. Anyway, they
6 were shoved into the armored car and were told by the commander
7 of the column, who was Colonel Lam, that they had to use the
8 armored car for their physical protection.

9 Senator Tower. Was that Colonel Lam, was he later ICORPS
1 Commander?

1 Mr. Conein. No, sir, this was a different Lam. Duong
2 Ngoc Lam was a fat little guy who wore a moustache who used
3 to command the civil guard, later became a General, yes, sir,
4 but he was not the ICORPS commander. He's also dead now.

1 Anyway, they were coming back with the column, who were
2 in radio communications with Big Minh and his entourage and
3 when they found out, when Big Minh found out that they were
4 prisoners, he gave an order to his aide, Captain Nhung, and
5 Captain Nhung killed them, in the armored car. The bodies were
6 taken directly to the General Staff Headquarters and later on
7 in the afternoon they were removed from the General Staff
8 Headquarters to Clinique St. Paul.

1 Senator Tower. Were they killed right after they were put
2 into the armored car?

1 Mr. Conein. No, they were killed on the way back, when

1 Big Minh's group, with his aide, crossed the column, halted it,
2 and Captain Nhung stepped into it and killed them.

Now other people who were in the armored car, I assume -- I do not know who did the stabbing wounds or anything else. I do know the two were killed by Captain Nhung.

6 We knew this within a matter of hours, exactly what
7 happened, and I reported it and it was reported back here at
8 Headquarters exactly what happened.

9 That is the story, sir.

Senator Huddleston. Do you know that Big Minh gave the order that they be killed?

Mr. Conein. I have it on very good authority of very
many people that Big Minh gave the order, not only of -- one
thing I can say, Senator, is that I kept contact with the junta
until the day that the United States officially recognized the
South Vietnamese government. There were several countries that
recognized, and I was acting as the liaison officer for the
Ambassador to the junta during this period of approximately ten
days or two weeks.

Senator Huddleston. Is it true that Big Minh and the Generals had made a definite appointment with the Generals to come to the Palace, at which time President Diem would surrender?

Mr. Conein. No, they didn't make a definite appointment.

Senator Huddleston. They didn't go to the Palace except to

1. Who to find him?

2 Mr. Conein. Yes, Big Minh went by himself. He had Phan
3 Ngoc Tau who knew the Palace the best, Major Bang -- B-a-n-g --
4 who was in the armored column. I can say that about an hour
5 after they left, Major Bang came back and I asked Major Bang,
6 whom I had known up in Hanoi back in 1945, I asked him, I said,
7 what were your orders? And he said, the orders going through
8 the Palace was that we were not to fire unless we were fired
9 upon. And I said, well, did you find them? And he said, no
1 we didn't find them yet. They had not known at that time where
11 they were.

Senator Huddleston. They expected him to be at the Palace?

17 Mr. Conein. They expected him to be at the Palace. Every-
18 body assumed, including myself, that they were at the Palace.

Senator Huddleston. Is it your judgment that at that time that they had expected to take them peacefully?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Huddleston. And to send them out of the country?

Mr. Conein. What was going to transpire was that they were going to take them peacefully. Big Minh himself, as the leader of the junta, was to take escort them back to the General Staff Headquarters where they would have the green table and President Diem was to sign over power to the Vice President. They were going to be held until I could get the aircraft, and then they were going to be flown out of the country, because

1 immediately after the signing that Diem would get through the
2 ceremony of turning over the powers to the Vice President, Tho,
3 he would ask for asylum and this would be broadcast.

4 Senator Huddleston. Then what reason do you believe that
5 Diem left the Palace? Was it to go to the church, or was he
6 really attempting to slip --

7 Mr. Conein. No, sir, we didn't find this out until
8 afterwards, because it was very baffling. I don't know how
9 they got out. Everybody talked about secret tunnels; there
10 were secret tunnels. There was a passage, because the Gailong
11 Palace -- now you have to understand that the Doc Lap Palace,
12 D-o-c L-a-p, was the Presidential Palace before the new one was
13 made, that belonged to the Emperor Bao Dai. The administrative --
14 the French Governor General's palace was in Gailong Palace.
15 When the Palace was bombed in February of '62 by the two
16 Vietnamese Air Force pilots, they moved out of that Palace and
17 took over the Gailong Palace.

18 The Gailong Palace was right behind the Saigon City Hall,
19 which was then, when it was constructed, was run by the French.
20 Well, between the Governor General's Palace, which was the
21 Gailong Palace, and the City Hall was about a half a block.
22 What they had was a passage underneath, just like you have here,
23 so that servants won't have to go out in the hot noonday sun,
24 and get a paper signed, they could go underneath.

25 And what President Diem and Nhu and his aide did was to --

TOP SECRET

65

1 down through that, walk out in front of the City Hall, got into
2 an automobile and drove on up to Mai Tuyen's house in Choldlon.

3 Senator Huddleston. What I'm trying to determine was what
4 their motive was? Were they in fact trying to evade being
5 apprehended, or were they going to church?

6 Mr. Conein. Sir, there are a lot of things not in this report
7 one of them is the Operation Bravo, and I hate to get into this
8 thing, Bravo I and Bravo II.

9 Senator Huddleston. All I want to know is were they trying
10 to avoid --

11 Mr. Conain. No, sir, because first of all, they thought,
12 when the coup started, that it was their coup.

13 Senator Huddleston. Well, according to other
14 information --

15 Senator Schweiker. Wait a minute. You lost me.

16 Senator Huddleston. According to other information --

17 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

18 Senator Huddleston. -- they had made an arrangement with
19 Big Minh that they would be at the Palace at a certain time,
20 and that Big Minh should come and take them and that they would
21 peacefully surrender and that they would be given passage out
22 of the country.

23 Now as I understand it, Big Minh and the column that you
24 talk about, the armored cars, went to the Palace with that
25 assumption they were going to be there.

TOP SECRET

1 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir

2 Senator Huddleston. When they arrived, they were not
3 there.

4 Mr. Conein. That's right, sir.

5 Senator Huddleston. They did not know where they were?

6 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

7 Senator Huddleston. The conclusion I draw is that this
8 was a breach of faith, and that it angered the Generals, and
9 because of that, when they did find them, they killed them.

10 Now is that accurate or not?

11 Mr. Conein. That is a very accurate way of describing it.
12 the reason being is that, if I can make a personal observation,
13 Big Minh is a very proud man and those of you who have been to
14 Southeast Asia know that face is very important, and at the
15 last moment when he lost face, when he was going up there in all
16 of his splendor with a sedan and everything else to receive
17 them, this probably was one of the things that ticked him off and
18 he gave the order.

19 Senator Huddleston. Is it your opinion that if they had
20 carried out the pre-arranged plan and had surrendered that the
21 scenario would have been much as you described? That they would
22 have had the Press Conference?

23 Mr. Conein. If they had carried it out and if Big Minh
24 would have found them there would have been too many people
25 present at the Palace for them to even attempt --

1 Senator Huddleston. That they would probably be alive
2 today?

3 Mr. Conein. They would probably be alive today. I might
4 also add that three days afterwards I was instrumental in getting
5 Ngo Dien Nhu's children out of the country.

6 Senator Tower. Senator Hart, do you want to proceed?

7 Senator Hart of Michigan. I think that clarifies it.

8 Senator Schweiker. Mr. Chairman?

9 Senator Tower. Senator Schweiker?

10 Senator Hart. Well, let me ask, the understanding that
11 at no point in the climactic days so far as you knew, was there
12 any discussion of killing Diem?

13 Mr. Conein. No, sir, there had never been any discussion
14 of any time about Diem himself being killed by anybody. I will
15 make one statement that many people -- and I'm talking about the
16 General and other people -- wanted Diem to be around. They could
17 not stand Nhu and Madam Nhu. This was an opinion of the people.

18 The Generals themselves wanted legal turnover of the
19 government. They wanted international recognition of their
20 coup. They did want that.

21 Senator Tower. Senator Schweiker?

22 Senator Schweiker. You made a point I didn't understand.
23 You said that it was Diem's own coup that he thought was
24 unfolding?

25 Mr. Conein. Yes, because I -- I actually ~~had~~ to get in there.

1 because it is in this report here. It is a very complicated
2 thing and you have to understand the devious mind of an Oriental;
3 and I'll tell you what, I spent many years out there and I still
4 don't understand it, but I can understand why they do certain
5 things, but don't ask me why.

6 In August of 1963, General Ton **That Dinh** had been Military
7 Governor, had been appointed Military Governor of Saigon and
8 Commander of the Third Corps. General Dinh was therefore in
9 power and working for Ngo Dien Nhu and Ngo Dien Diem directly
10 in August of 1963.

11 When the military curfew and Military Governor of
12 Saigon's powers were taken away on the 18th of September of
13 1963, Ton **That Dinh** considered himself the hero of Saigon. He
14 saved the Diem regime in August.

15 He also, during that time, had made plans to have what we
16 call Bravo I and Bravo II that Diem -- or Nhu -- would have his
17 own coup, Diem and Nhu would go down to Vung Tau as if they
18 were escaping and there would be immediately a counter coup put
19 on by -- all instigated by Nhu -- a counter coup put on by Diem
20 at the same time and bring back Nhu and Diem by popular
21 acclamation.

22 So, in the beginning of the coup, Ton **That Dinh**, who was
23 sometime erratic -- or, he's still alive; I don't want to say
24 he's erratic -- or sometimes a little funny, very devious, he
25 had convinced Ngo Dien Nhu that he was going to go through

1 this plan. So they assumed, at 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon
2 when troops were moving and everything else that it was their
3 coup. This was Ton That Dinh's plan..

4 What they didn't know was Ton That Dinh was the military
5 commander of Saigon for the coup.

6 Senator Schweiker. Double agent, as we say.

7 Mr. Conein. Well, he was triple about that time.

8 Senator Morgan. Where is he now?

9 Mr. Conein. Sir?

10 Senator Morgan. Where is he now?

11 Mr. Conein. I don't know. I do not know if he escaped
12 this last thing or not. I don't know if he got out. He was a
13 Senator.

14 Senator Huddleston. That explains it.

15 Senator Schweiker. That's why he was a triple agent.

16 Mr. Conein. He was a Senator, an elected Senator of the
17 Vietnamese and he was the military chairman of the Senate
18 Military Affairs Committee in Vietnam.

19 Senator Mondale. You had a substantial amount of money in
20 piasters in your private safe which you were asked to bring
21 with you to the Joint General Staff Headquarters, right?

22 Mr. Conein. I had, and I don't recall exactly the amount
23 of money. There is someplace somewhere an accounting of the
24 money and also the signature of General Don who received some
25 of this money. I don't recall -- and I'm telling you

TOP SECRET

68

1 truthfully, I don't recall if I had 3 1/2 million or 5 million
2 piastars. I said I brought a little brown bag; it was one of
3 these diplomatic sort of courier bags and it was stuffed with
4 money.

5 I had made some certain contingency plans for my own
6 protection because it became obvious to me that if anything
7 happened that my family might suffer, and also that if the
8 Diem government found out that I was involved in a conspiracy,
9 if we may call it that, that I probably would have a very
10 efficient Vietcong incident -- in other words, I would be
11 blown up or assassinated or something like that and it would be
12 blamed on the Vietcong for doing that.

13 Therefore, I took certain precautions.

14 I had made arrangements to have one FA Special Forces
15 team available upon signal to protect my house when the coup
16 came off. I had also made arrangements to have a military jet
17 with proper type of communications equipment so that I would,
18 no matter what happened, I would always be in communication.

19 I also --

20 Senator Mondale. Was your family with you in Saigon?

21 Mr. Conain. Yes. I had just had a daughter born three
22 months before, and one of the things I wanted was, they could
23 kill me but I didn't want my family to pay for what I did.
24 Therefore, I had one complete FA team of the Fifth Special Forces
25 at my house during the coup.

TOP SECRET

1 I had made a contingency plan for funds. Now the amount
2 of funds -- like I tell you, I don't recall exactly how much,
3 it was 3 1/2 or 5 million piasters.

4 Senator Baker. How much is that in dollars?

5 Mr. Conein. About \$70,000. Now this is roughly, I'm
6 figuring it up now in my head, I'm not a mathematician. And
7 I took this money and put it in the bag, the brown bag, the
8 reason being that for the first twenty-four hours there were
9 two things that were vitally important. There were certain
10 units that would be diverted at the last moment. These units
11 were going to be put into a situation they did not know of, so
12 therefore they did not have the rice and the bread. That was
13 the most important thing, rice and bread.

14 The second thing was that we did not want, under any
15 circumstances, of any personality who would be shot or killed
16 during the coup that there wasn't a gesture made to pay off the
17 family immediately. This is something that you gentlemen
18 probably don't know, but there are no insurances in Vietnam in
19 the proper sense that we know of, so there's always, when some-
20 body is killed, there is a sum of money given.

21 The other thing was, we had to have volunteer medical
22 facilities available in addition to the military facilities.
23 We wanted to be sure that there were certain medical facilities
24 so that we could take care of our own wounded.

25 Well, these things have to be prepared, gentlemen, and this

1 wasn't a lot of money -- it was a lot of money in piasters.

2 All of these monies have been accounted for, they were
3 accounted for by me, they were signed for by the General, and --
4 for each payment. Now, I do not know where those receipts are.

5 Senator Mondale. Could I? I'm not getting at -- there's
6 no implication, I hope, about the management of money. I'm just
7 trying to find out what the money was for.

8 Mr. Conein. It was to pay for food --

9 Senator Mondale. In other words, you have something like
10 \$70,000 in piasters, give or take whatever the arithmetic, and
11 how long had you had that money?

12 Mr. Conein. I had had that money since approximately, I
13 would say around the 24th of October. I had that in a safe in
14 my house.

15 Senator Mondale. And did that money come to you through
16 the CIA?

17 Mr. Conein. I requested it from the Finance Office, yes,
18 sir.

19 Senator Mondale. He provided you the money, you brought
20 it out and kept it in your home and then when was the first call
21 for the money? Was that the day --

22 Mr. Conein. I took it with me.

23 Senator Mondale. You had it in your home?

24 Mr. Conein. Yes, I had it in my home, and when I changed
25 into uniform to go out to General Staff --

1 Senator Mondale. But they asked you to bring money at
2 that time, did they?

3 Mr. Conein. I had made arrangements that I would bring a
4 certain sum of contingency funds.

5 Senator Mondale. With General Don?

6 Mr. Conein. With General Don.

7 Senator Mondale. He asked you to bring the money, didn't
8 he? Did I understand you to say bring as much money as you
9 could lay your hands on?

10 Mr. Conein. No, not as much money as I could. If it were
11 that, I would have taken a b-bag full. But the thing of it was,
12 it was only for a small sum of money, a contingency fund for
13 a twenty-four hour or thirty-six hour period, which I did not
14 know at that time.

15 Senator Mondale. What did you understand that money to be
16 for? For what purposes?

17 Mr. Conein. The money was to pay for those units who, at
18 the last moment, when their officers would give the order to
19 march, who had no time to get their food, to draw the supplies.

20 Senator Mondale. Anything else?

21 Mr. Conein. To pay for medical --

22 Senator Mondale. Expenses.

23 Mr. Conein. -- expenses.

24 Senator Mondale. All right.

25 Anything else?

1 Mr. Conein. To pay the death benefits for any person,
2 you know, killed.

3 Senator Mondale. Did he tell you that's what he wanted it
4 for, or did you know that that is what it was for?

5 Mr. Conein. I knew that's what it was for.

6 Senator Tower. I would like to bring up at this point,
7 Director Colby has testified about this.

8 Mr. Schwarz. Not in the same detail.

9 Senator Tower. Not in the same detail.

10 Senator Mondale. Well, I'm sorry. I was not here this
11 morning.

12 Senator Tower. That's all right.

13 Senator Mondale. So in that sense, we were bringing,
14 through you, assets which they would use to help carry out and
15 pay the costs of the coup.

16 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

17 Senator Mondale. All right.

18 Now, was there any discussion about whether it was risky
19 for you to be personally present at the JCS or anywhere else
20 with these Generals at or near the time of the coup?

21 Did you have any discussions about that?

22 Mr. Conein. There were several discussions about my
23 personal security prior to the coup. There were also discussions
24 with me because I was worried about my family in case --

25 Senator Mondale. Well, it was clear that this was very

1 risky for you, but apart from that, was there any question about
2 whether your presence as an American officer would link us, if
3 known, to the coup?

4 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

5 Senator Mondale. Because I think you mentioned you got
6 out of it fast when you saw newsmen.

7 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, I was scared.

8 Senator Mondale. You didn't want to be seen there.

9 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

10 Senator Mondale. You didn't want to be seen there, because
11 you didn't want our association, whatever it might be, with this
12 group known to the public?

13 Mr. Conein. I did not want --

14 Senator Mondale. Is that correct? That's in here?

15 Mr. Schwarz. Yes.

16 Senator Tower. You were ordered in and ordered out, weren't
17 you?

18 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

19 Senator Mondale. Well, you left yourself?

20 Mr. Conein. I left myself.

21 Senator Mondale. Without any orders.

22 Mr. Conein. At the moment I saw that they were going to
23 bring the Press in, for the capitulation of President Diem, was
24 at the time that they told me to get the hell out, General Don
25 said, get the hell out, we're bringing in the Press.

1 Senator Mondale. So were there discussions about the
2 wisdom of having you there at all at any time; or did they need
3 a liaison?

4 Mr. Conein. No, sir, it wasn't a question of a discussion
5 in the sense that you're talking about, Senator. You must
6 understand the relationship. I was part and parcel of the whole
7 conspiracy, so if something went wrong, they would go down the
8 drain with me. We were all going down the drain together.

9 Senator Tower. Can we suspend at this point?

10 Let us go vote.

11 (A brief recess was taken.)

12 Senator Tower. Phil, I believe you had the floor when we
13 suspended.

14 Senator Hart of Michigan. I have no questions.

15 Senator Tower. All right.

16 Fritz?

17 Mr. Schwarz. To go back to the telephone conversation about
18 the airplane.

19 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

20 Mr. Schwarz. After you obtained the word that you couldn't
21 get a plane for twenty-four hours, was that word passed on to
22 Mr. Ngo Diem Diem?

23 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

24 This was a telephone conversation, because President Diem
25 had talked to Big Minh and to General Don and it was the first

1 time during the whole coup that the President had had a chance to
2 talk to Big Minh. Up to that point, he refused at all points to
3 talk to Big Minh.

4 Mr. Schwarz. And in any event, you are quite sure that
5 the word about the plane being available but not being available
6 for twenty-four hours didn't get to Mr. Diem?

7 Mr. Conein. I am positive, because the reason being it was
8 after the conversation with President Diem that both Generals
9 Don and Big Minh came to me and asked me about getting an air-
10 plane to get them out. It was after they had hung up, and this
11 was when I called the Embassy and spoke to Mr. [REDACTED]

12 Mr. Schwarz. And he gave you then three reasons, or three
13 comments, about the airplane? He gave you those right over the
14 phone, or did he call you back?

15 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, right over the phone and I trans-
16 mitted that message back and I don't recall if Big Minh had
17 walked out but I know that General Don had been told by me
18 exactly that it would take twenty-four hours.

19 Senator Tower. Senator Mondale had the floor when we
20 suspended.

21 Senator Mondale. Just one question.

22 How did you arrive at the figure of money that you had in
23 your possession with your local office there? How was that figure
24 determined, was it just a ballpark amount?

25 Mr. Conein. The amount of money?

1 Senator Mondale. Yes.

2 Mr. Conein. That was all that would fit in this briefcase.
3 and I wasn't going to haul two briefcases.

4 Senator Mondale. No, what did you -- go to the Director
5 and say, I'd like this much?

6 Mr. Conein. No, sir, I had asked for a certain sum but I
7 could not put it all in this briefcase. This is why I cannot
8 answer you really, if I spent 3 1/2 or 5 1/2.

9 I do know that when I went back to check my safe, one of
10 the packages of 250,000 piasters had fallen over the back end
11 of the little guide rail, you know, that keeps the safe drawers --
12 and one of those packages had fallen back and I remember taking
13 that and I said, look, I've got some left, and I turned it back
14 in and got a receipt for it. So this is why I cannot tell you
15 exactly the amount. They know, and I would say roughly it's in
16 the \$70,000 figure.

17 Senator Mondale. Thank you.

18 Senator Morgan. I have just one question.

19 Senator Tower. I believe Mr. Colby testified this morning
20 it was 5 million piasters.

21 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, but I didn't spend it all.

22 Senator Tower. Senator Morgan?

23 Senator Morgan. I just have one question, Mr. Conein.

24 Do you have any reason to believe that there was any undue
25 delay on the part of the Embassy in making a plane available?

1 Mr. Conein. No, sir, the fact being that an aircraft of
2 that size, it would take -- because it would have to come from
3 Guam, sir, then the pilots would have to brief and all the thing
4 on how to go. Now you must understand also that the airport was
5 closed down at that time. No aircraft were coming in or leaving
6 without special permission.

7 Senator Morgan. Would it have come to Tan Son Nhut?

8 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

9 Senator Morgan. Now did I understand you to tell Senator
10 Mondale that General Minh never knew that it would take twenty-
11 four hours?

12 Mr. Consin. I don't know whether he knew it or not. I
13 say that I know that I told this to General Don. I can't recall.
14 This was all -- everything is over with, you know?

15 Senator Morgan. But the main thing in my mind, in your
16 opinion there was no undue delay in making the plan available?

17 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

18 Senator Morgan. Well that was the question that was in
19 my mind.

20 Senator Tower. I think we were all a little confounded by
21 that this morning, but I think the explanation of that is that
22 the airplane had to fly directly to the country of assylum and
23 couldn't stop anyplace else. That would require longrange
24 aircraft like the KC-135. You couldn't make it in a C-47.

25 Senator Morgan. Which would not normally be available on

1 Taiwan?

2 Mr. Conein. No, sir, it was not available outside of
3 Guam or Hawaii at that time, sir. Later on they were available
4 in Subick Bay and Clark Field.

5 Senator Tower. Senator Baker?

6 Senator Baker. Thank you.

7 Who laid on that requirement that it be a nonstop flight
8 to the country of asylum?

9 Mr. Conein. This I do not know, if it was the Ambassador
10 or if this was just an assumption of the people who knew the
11 Ambassador's thinking. This I do not know, sir. I do not know
12 if it came from the White House or the State Department. I do
13 not know.

14 Senator Baker. Do we know from other material?

15 Mr. Kirbow. We assume that McGeorge Bundy might know on
16 Monday.

17 Mr. Schwarz. We don't know.

18 Did you have an assumption from the conversation with Mr.
19 [REDACTED] that he was prepared for your question? I mean, he came
20 back with an answer that had three rather complicated points.

21 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir. I assumed that the moment that I
22 would get the go ahead from the junta that they wanted the
23 aircraft that I would levy the requirement and the Embassy and
24 the military were prepared to levy the requirement immediately.

25 Mr. Schwarz. No, but did you assume from your conversati...

1 with Mr. [REDACTED] that he was prepared for your question in light of
2 the complex answer that he came back with?

3 Mr. Conein. Sir, I don't know. I would assume that he had
4 been prepared and obviously if he was prepared that well that
5 somebody must have talked to him. I wasn't there. I was at
6 the other place.

7 Mr. Schwarz. Just to make sure the record is clear on it,
8 but for those rules laid down in the telephone conversation,
9 there were airplanes that the United States had control over
10 which could have been used?

11 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

12 If -- for example, sir, let me point out one thing, that
13 if it had been Philippines Islands that granted asylum first
14 that we would then not have had to use a C-135, we could have
15 used General Markins' C-130 which was a converted VIP plane.

16 But at that time and under those circumstances there was
17 no way of knowing which country -- assume that it was Japan,
18 we did not want the airplane to land in Taiwan.

19 Mr. Schwarz. But that was a matter of choice?

20 Mr. Conein. A matter of choice.

21 Senator Baker. What do you mean, "we didn't?"

22 Mr. Conein. We -- according to my instructions, were that
23 the airplane was not to make a stop.

24 Senator Baker. What do you mean, "we"? You said
25 "you didn't know who laid on that requirement. Was that your

TOP SECRET

81

1 wish?

2 Mr. Conein. I say we don't know. I'm talking now, we
3 the United States government, I'm assuming, because the gentleman
4 has asked me a question and I assume that he had talked to
5 the Ambassador.

6 Senator Baker. Any further questions, any members of the
7 Committee?

8 I reckon that's it.

9 Mr. Conein. Thank you very much, sir.

10 Senator Tower. Thank you, Mr. Conein. We appreciate your
11 testimony.

12 We will ask you back to discuss the matter that Senator
13 Baker brought up.

14 Mr. Conein. At your convenience, sir.

15 (The questions by Senator Baker follows:)

TOP SECRET

3:40 p.m.

1 Senator Tower. Let's go back on the record.

2 Senator Baker. Mr. Conine, while we're waiting for the
3 other Committee members to return, I have a few questions on
4 other matters and we can arrange the transcript so that it
5 will not interrupt the flow of your other testimony, if that's
6 all right with you, Mr. Chairman.

7 Senator Tower. All right.

8 Senator Baker. Are you acquainted with a man named A. J.
9 Woolston-Smith?

10 Mr. Conine. A. J. Woolston? No, sir.

11 Senator Baker. A private investigator in New York City?

12 Mr. Conine. No, sir.

13 Senator Baker. Do you have any information about the
14 involvement of the CIA, the DEA or its predecessor -- what was
15 the predecessor?

16 Mr. Conine. BNDD.

17 Senator Baker. -- in any domestic assassination?

18 Mr. Conine. No, sir.

19 Senator Baker. Do you have any knowledge of any assassina-
20 tions or any attempted assassinations of persons related to
21 international drug traffic by persons connected or affiliated
22 with the CIA or the DEA?

23 Mr. Conine. No, sir.

24 Senator Baker. None at all?

TOP SECRET

48

83

1 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

2 Senator Baker. Do you have any knowledge of any CIA
3 involvement in any drug traffic for profit in Vietnam?

4 Mr. Conein. No, sir, I do not.

5 Senator Baker. Have you ever been involved in or had any
6 knowledge of the purchase or the manufacturer or sale of
7 assassination devices to or by a Federal government agency?

8 Mr. Conein. Sir, I think you are referring to something
9 that was asked by Senator Weicker one time when I was looking
10 at Title III equipment, which is bugging equipment for the
11 Drug Enforcement Administration. I was shown some, without
12 solicitation, I was shown some devices, that were booby-trap
13 type devices. I would like to make it a part of the record
14 that the Secret Service has been completely informed of this
15 and also the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearm know of these
16 devices.

17 And I also furnished a complete brochure of all the
18 description of these assassination type devices to the Secret
19 Service.

20 Senator Baker. Have you got a copy of that brochure?

21 Mr. Conein. No, sir, I do not.

22 Senator Morgan. Senator Baker, would you yield on that?

23 Senator Baker. Yes.

24 Senator Morgan. Would you repeat that name again? I'm
25 sorry, when you say non-related, I started reading the paper.

TOP SECRET

49

84

1 Would you give me that name again?

2 Senator Baker. The name?

3 Senator Morgan. Yes, sir.

4 Senator Baker. Mr. A. J. Woolston-Smith.

5 Senator Morgan. Was that somewhere around Alexandria
6 here?

7 Senator Baker. Well, he's been here, and he's been in
8 New York City, he's been in St. Louis, and I understand at one
9 time he had an office on the West Coast.

10 Senator Morgan. Would you add to that the name Paris
11 Theodore, with regards to any kind of assassination devices?

12 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

13 Mr. Schwarz. Who did show you the assassination devices?

14 Mr. Conein. This was, I think, Senator Weicker asked me
15 specifically in January, I don't recall the date, that he had
16 a report that I had seen assassination devices. I had testified
17 personally to the Senator with an attorney present, and while
18 there I told him that there was another one of my staff members
19 had been present and had seen the same devices and he called
20 for the staff member who verified everything that I had said,
21 and I did not open my mouth during the questioning of this
22 other member of my staff.

23 Mr. Schwarz. Who showed you the assassination devices.

24 Mr. Conein. Sir?

25 Mr. Schwarz. Who showed you the assassination devices?

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Senator Tower. Could we suspend this line of questioning
for a moment?

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WARD & PAUL

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TOP SECRET

51

1 Senator Tower. Off the record.

2 (Discussion off the record.)

3 Senator Baker. I will refrain from asking the question,
4 but I wish the next time that we ask Mr. Conein
5 to come back here and bring with him the paraphenalia, the
6 devices, and any brochures that he has.

7 Senator Tower. Do you have any of the devices?

8 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

9 Senator Tower. Do you have the brochure?

10 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, I have a copy of the brochure that
11 I furnished the Secret Service.

12 Senator Baker. I might ask this one thing, or mention
13 "this one thing, rather. You might be prepared to describe to
14 us how you came to have the brochure, particularly with reference
15 to whether you solicited it or were solicited and whether this
16 was the only one that you ever had, and similar material.

17 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

18 Senator Tower. Anything further?

19 All right.

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TOP SECRET

87

1 Senator Tovar. If no one has anything to bring up at
2 this time, the Committee is adjourned until Monday afternoon at
3 2:00 o'clock.

4 (Whereupon, at 5:04 o'clock p.m., the hearing in the
5 above-entitled matter was recessed, to reconvene at 2:00 o'clock
6 p.m., Monday, June 23, 1975).

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TOP SECRET

10/22/07

Chau Phuc (all to BP)

Chau 3 point contribution
on role of soccer

1) We as Human we inherited 200 years very secret - Because of heritage - ^{Very good} we don't take our attitude of superiority, but consider of big changes - development of under-developed countries, the same case, different difference in culture - take our attitude of learning - without requiring - case take 200 years of success.

2) We should remember we have a big challenge - China - should consider to act to win the sympathy of people.

3) We - with our superiority - attitude of humility - so we case win the respect - & comprehension - winning people -

(split between upper classes & lower classes)
V. Hugo - Don't know their own people

High ranking ~~the~~ With the former controlling S. VN did S. VN have a democratic system? - Only thing which is a process of a process -