

MEMORANDUM

See to Johnson  
See  
6/14 Houghton  
Biographical  
Sheet attached  
to Document T 206  
DACS  
Vietnam 1964

Subject: Assigning to Vietnam the Personnel We Need to Win

1. The Current Situation in Vietnam. The death of President Diem created a leadership vacuum in Vietnam. This vacuum remains largely unfilled. The latest leader, General Khanh, is energetic and dedicated but lacks popular support and political experience. His government is divided into political factions who have never before worked together. The French are actively working to undermine Khanh, hoping to engender another coup by pro-neutralist elements. And the Vietcong, taking advantage of the confusion following both coups, are rapidly undermining the government's morale and position in the countryside. In summary, the situation is desperate; degeneration into further coups and then disintegration appears inevitable unless effective South Vietnamese leadership is soon developed. Needless to say, without such leadership we cannot win. The raw elements for capable leadership exist but they are not likely to coalesce in viable form without skillful U. S. advice and support. There is too much inexperience and time is too limited.
2. The Present U. S. Team. From all reports at present in Vietnam we have capable and dedicated administrators and several high level political and military personalities (Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins). We do not have on hand anyone with proven political action and psychological warfare experience in defeating a Communist insurgency by building local leadership for our side capable of inspiring the local population, winning their confidence, and undermining the Communists. In short, experience in developing the kind of leadership typified by the late President Magsaysay of the Philippines.
3. What is Most Needed. We need a man, working under and for the Ambassador, who is capable of molding General Khanh or some other Vietnamese into a national leader by advising him and other key Vietnamese and by acting as the informal coordinator of overall U. S. efforts behind the emergence of this leadership. In other words, for the counter-insurgency campaign, we need a campaign manager.
4. Who Is Needed. The selection of the right man for this job is obviously critical for success. My own examination of the Cold War history of the United States for the past fifteen years convinces me that there is only one man who can successfully perform such an assignment. He is Major General (Ret.) Edward G. Lansdale.

5. General Lansdale's Qualifications. General Lansdale's background, I believe, uniquely qualifies him for such an assignment. He has twice before successfully served his country in a similar capacity.
  - a. In 1950, when the Communist Huks were about to take over the Philippines, General Lansdale (at that time a Lt. Col.) was assigned as JUSMAG liaison officer to Ramon Magsaysay, then recently named Philippine Secretary of Defense. Although technically assigned to JUSMAG, Lansdale actually worked under the U. S. Ambassador and acted as a friend and advisor to Magsaysay during his successful campaign against the Huks and afterwards through the 1953 elections when he became President of the Philippines. For this service, Lansdale received the National Security Medal from our National Security Council.
  - b. In 1954, General Lansdale (then a Col.) was sent to Vietnam in a special effort by the United States to keep it from falling into Communist hands after the Geneva Accords. Attached to MAAG and operating under the Chief of MAAG, General O'Daniel and under the Ambassador, but with interagency powers, Lansdale acted as a close personal advisor to President Diem, to Vietnamese Army leaders and to many other Vietnamese leaders and officials in political, internal security, psychological warfare and counterinsurgency matters. His effective assistance in their hour of need, when few thought South Vietnam would survive, won him the friendship and high respect of many Vietnamese, a number of whom are influential in the Khanh Government. In 1956, when he left Vietnam, the country had its first constitution, its first elected President, and such internal stability as to cause the Soviets to urge postponement of the plebiscite called for in the Geneva Accords.
6. Conclusion. Some voices, perhaps even prominent ones within the Administration, may object to General Lansdale's going to Vietnam, because in order to get things done in the past he has treading on sensitive toes. These personal considerations should not, in my opinion, be allowed to intrude upon such a critical assignment. Judging by the relative lack of success of our efforts so far in Vietnam, nothing less than the most capable and experienced man available can do the job; a job which must be done if we are to win the war in Vietnam. We tend to forget that the situations faced in the Philippines in 1950 and in Vietnam in 1954 were equally as critical if not more so than what we face today in Vietnam. It seems especially appropriate, therefore, that we should once again call on the services of the man to whom many give principal credit

for having saved the Philippines and Vietnam in the past. I, therefore, most urgently recommend that you consider the immediate assignment of General Lansdale to Vietnam as an assistant to Ambassador Lodge, with sufficient authority under Lodge's overall leadership, to direct U. S. political and psychological warfare efforts to win the war.