

Dobrynin's inquiries on these matters did not appear to have special note of urgency or alarm.

8. Conversation also included brief exchange on situation in China. Bundy noted that there now appeared to be at least temporary settling down in cultural revolution, perhaps related to need to concentrate on planting season. Dobrynin expressed strong agreement that latter was key factor, and stated judgment that resumption of struggle highly likely in view of deep-seated views held by Mao personally.

9. *Comment.* General Dobrynin mood seemed little if any changed from that evidenced in his February 23 conversation with Secretary (refel). He seemed almost resigned to present state of affairs and present Hanoi position. His recriminations and his references to our military actions were along familiar lines and moderate in tone. While holding out no hope that Hanoi might in fact pick up our January 20 avenue, his prediction of resumed struggle in China might conceivably suggest Moscow is lying low in case Chinese developments should give them another chance to exert influence.

Rusk

# 118. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State<sup>1</sup>

Saigon, March 25, 1967, 1137Z.

21308. 1. Prime Minister Ky spoke to me very frankly March 25 about the choice of a military candidate for President. Nothing he said could be taken to mean that the decision between Thieu and himself has already been made. However, his remarks suggested that he may be thinking seriously about stepping aside in favor of Thieu.

2. He began by saying that the armed forces will not choose a candidate. "The situation is very simple," he said, "if Thieu decides to run, I will support him. He is senior and it is up to him to have the first chance at it. If he decides not to run, then I will run."

3. I asked him what Thieu was thinking, and he said Thieu was "undecided." I asked how much time there was in which to make up his mind, and he said, "Not more than two weeks."

<sup>1</sup> Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXVIII. Secret; Exdis. Received at 8:33 a.m. Rostow wrote on the cable: "Herewith the latest on Ky's election plans in relation to Thieu" and sent it to the President, who was at Camp David March 25-27, 1967.

4. I congratulated Ky on his attitude, which I thought was both correct and intelligent. It would be a disaster if there was to be a conflict between him and Thieu, and it was a fine thing for him to take such a broad minded attitude. He was young; He could wait. In any case, there are many other things which he could do besides being President.

Lodge

# 119. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Komer) to President Johnson<sup>1</sup>

Washington, March 25, 1967.

## SUBJECT

Guam and Aftermath

I decided to go right down to Saigon after Guam, to show that the new team was in action, to work out an optimum relationship with Westy, and to deal with other pressing business. It was my seventh trip in less than a year. I believe that the following matters are worth reporting to you; by now I have sufficiently intimate ties with all senior US and most senior GVN personalities that they are eager to confide in me.

I. *The Real Impact of Guam.* Leaving aside the press problem, Guam once again helped significantly to move forward the war. As at Honolulu and Manila,<sup>2</sup> bidding the GVN to the conference table forced them to put best foot forward. Thus Guam, for example, expedited GVN "ratification of the Constitution." Far few people realize the impact such conferences have along these lines.

As for the GVN/US reports to you at Guam, I don't care how many press wizards call me a rosy optimist, but I believe that Ky/Thieu's air of confidence more accurately reflects the real pace of events than Westy's more prudent views.

I had long talks with key GVN Ministers Thang, Vien, and Hanh at Guam.<sup>3</sup> We moved several items forward, especially on pacification.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Robert Komer, White House Chronological, 1 January-1 May 1967. Secret.

<sup>2</sup> Conferences held in February and October 1966.

<sup>3</sup> Nguyen Duc Thang, Minister for Revolutionary Development; Cao Van Vien

I played up economic facts and figures for the press as you requested, and even got a page 1 story in Tuesday's *NY Times*.<sup>4</sup>

II. *Making Pacification Move*. To lose no time in getting the show on the road, I devoted top priority to working out my relationship with Westy. I am pleased to report that I think we have reached a good, workable meeting of minds. Westy and I can—and will—work together. He says he will use me as a manager to supervise all civil/military aspects of pacification—not just as an adviser.

I have already discussed the proposed arrangements briefly with Ellsworth Bunker, who concurs. He also expects me to work closely with him, which I will gladly do. Walt and I will clear the new scheme with Rusk and McNamara in the form of a NSAM and submit it to you soonest for final decision. I believe that we should act promptly to forestall further press speculation.

III. *Personnel for the Bunker Team*. Ellsworth deserves the strongest team we can field. Rostow says you've promised Ellsworth anyone he wants, and I'll now produce the names:

A. A replacement for Roy Wehrle<sup>5</sup> on the economic side is the most critical need. Gaud, Lodge, Porter, in fact everyone most strongly proposes my own economic deputy *Chuck Cooper*; he's brilliant, highly knowledgeable, action-oriented, an ideal choice. Bunker concurs subject to meeting him. I've twisted his arm, and he'll come *provided* he can bring his wife and infant. Since infants stay with their mothers full-time, this would *not* violate the no-children principle. There is *no* substitute for Cooper, except one guy at Yale who has five kids he won't leave.

B. Bunker and I believe *Lansdale should stay* at least through the election, despite the fact that Lodge advises getting rid of him. Not least, the press would have a field day if Lansdale quit.

C. *Zorthian* should stay on a few months for a smooth transition, but I'm coming around to Len Marks' view that he's a mixed blessing. Ellsworth and I have a top-notch eventual successor in mind.

D. *Abrams will be a great addition*. However, Westy seems clearly nervous that Abrams is being sent out as his eventual replacement. Unless this is really the case, a little reassuring LBJ message for Westy would be helpful.

Sorting out my role vis-à-vis Abrams as Westy's two deputies will be a problem, but Westy and I think it a manageable one. Westy wants me to supervise pacification—military as well as civilian—while Abrams focusses primarily on revamping the Vietnamese forces. This

<sup>4</sup> See *The New York Times*, March 21, 1967.

<sup>5</sup> Economic officer at the Embassy in Saigon.

makes good sense. Lodge says that you told him Abrams would "run the military side of pacification," but McNamara and Rostow say he is rather to be a general deputy. I hope the latter is indeed the case, because the whole rationale for putting me under Westy to run pacification is to unify civil/military management for better results.<sup>6</sup> And if I don't know more about how to get pacification rolling than anyone else on the new team, I'll eat that Stetson you owe me.

I have much else to report, but will hold off in order to get the above to you pronto. As I hope McNamara and Rostow told you at Guam, I will cheerfully do my best to help bring home the bacon in any capacity you want. But my ability to produce—and you know I can—will inevitably depend on my being cast in a role where I can operate most effectively. If you approve the new arrangements, I will take off in two weeks—as the first of the new team to show up on the job.<sup>7</sup>

R. W. Komer<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Komer and Westmoreland met in Saigon during late March to work out organizational guidelines for CORDS. Komer would report directly to the MACV Commander and be in sole charge of pacification under the "single manager" concept. General Creighton W. Abrams would have the task of invigorating the ARVN. Their agreement is contained in Komer's memorandum to McNamara, March 29; Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Vietnam Files: FRC 77-0075, Vietnam (March and April 1967). Komer discussed the issues involved in the shifting of pacification responsibility in a March 27 memorandum to the President, to which was attached a draft NSAM. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Robert Komer, Memos to the President, January-May 1967) This draft NSAM later became NSAM No. 362, May 9, Document 167.

<sup>7</sup> In telegram 20988 from Saigon, March 22, Lodge laid out a scenario for the change-over of Embassy staff. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXVIII) In telegram 21226 from Saigon, March 25, Lodge wrote: "MACV's success (which means the success of the United States and all of us) will, therefore, willy-nilly, be judged not so much on the brilliant performance of the U.S. troops as on its success in getting ARVN, RF and PF quickly to function as a first-class counter-terror, counter-guerrilla force." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27 VIET S)

port of our actions in view of the completely negative attitude of the other side, this would of course be most helpful.

7. If we could make some dramatic announcement such as a substantial increase in our forces in the South and combine it with an indication that we were leveling off our bombing in the North or even better confining it to the infiltration routes, we could make the outlook for the Vietcong very dark and at the same time reduce the risk of increased Soviet support of North Vietnam. Such a course might, it seems to me, reduce some of the criticism at home and thus the hope of North Vietnam that we will be forced by our own public opinion to withdraw.

8. It is against the foregoing background that I would suggest that rather than have George Brown continue to make peace noises when he comes to Moscow, he should convey to the Soviets a sense of our determination to see this affair through.

Thompson

# 138. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State<sup>1</sup>

Saigon, April 20, 1967, 1015Z.

23584. 1. Pursuant to your 178636,<sup>2</sup> I called on Ky Thursday afternoon and cited the report which Lansdale had made to me about his conversation with Ky on Tuesday.<sup>3</sup> I said I would like to know what

<sup>1</sup> Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Exdis. Received at 7:53 a.m. and passed to the White House, DOD, and CIA at 8:07 a.m.

<sup>2</sup> In telegram 178636 to Saigon, April 19, the Department expressed continuing concern over Ky's "ill-advised ploy vis-à-vis Thieu." Because Thieu would not recognize a decision by those Generals already allied with Ky as a "military mandate" and refused to step aside for Ky, the Department instructed Lodge to emphasize with both men the "absolute necessity for their getting together to resolve this issue and to persuade their colleagues to abide by it." (Ibid.) Although the possibility existed that Ky and Thieu had concluded that "it would be unwise to force this any more than they have now," the Department believed that it might be necessary for the Ambassador in Saigon to intervene personally to pre-empt any trouble. (Telegram 177722 to Saigon, April 18; *ibid.*)

<sup>3</sup> On April 18 Ky told Lansdale that the Generals asked Thang to inform Thieu, then recuperating in the hospital from an appendectomy, of their consensus. (Telegram 23389 from Saigon, April 18; *ibid.*) In a discussion with Lansdale on April 19, Thang stated that he had refused to undertake such an action. In fact, no one had gone to the hospital on this "errand." Lodge warned that the impact of a confrontation between Thieu and Ky could have "extremely dangerous" ramifications for the war effort. (Telegram 23489 from Saigon, April 19; *ibid.*)

actually had happened and said that, understandably, we in the U.S. Government would worry over even the slightest possibility that there would be any kind of an adversarial relationship between Ky and Thieu or between any two prominent Vietnamese military men.

2. Ky reflected for a fairly long moment and then said: "You don't have to worry. I personally will make any sacrifice to avoid a clash or division between us." I believe he means it.

3. He then gave me his account of the episode of Monday, April 17, as follows:

4. Members of the Directorate are worried: about military developments in I Corps and about preparations for the election. They see that Thieu is still—and Ky lapsed into French—"indecis." Meaning undecided and vacillating. They have heard a rumor that Thieu says he is ready to support Big Minh or civilian. They see the time going by with only four months till election day and consider that this is none too much.

5. So the members of the Directorate were nervous and they came to Ky on Monday. They recalled that the day before the Constitution was adopted, Ky had asked Thieu whether he was going to run or not. And Thieu had never said.

6. In Ky's own words: "The Generals said to me: You have more chance to win. You are more frank, and I (Ky) said to them: 'What can you do?' and so they said: 'We will ask Thang to go to Thieu and to explain the situation.' "

7. *Comment:* In other words, according to Ky, there was not an endorsement of Ky as the favorite of the military. It was an informal meeting of some (not all) Generals who were worried and concerned, and who wanted to explain the situation to Thieu and get an explanation out of him. *End comment.*

8. I said I was glad to hear his explanation and to realize that this was not an "ill advised ploy" (to use the phrase in 178636) regarding Thieu. I stressed the fact that if there was not a broad consensus among the military leadership, all the political progress that had been made would be jeopardized. The importance of the Generals being together was something which President Johnson had stressed in a very moving and persuasive way at Guam. To this Ky agreed.

9. I then said that there were plenty of honors to go around, that when men rise as high in the field of government as Ky and Thieu that it isn't a question of one being in and the other being out. If, for example, Thieu were to be President, then it would be quite understandable for Ky to have a very prominent Cabinet office—or whatever he wanted.

10. One thing was certain, I said, and that was that if there was a

Nam could not submerge their personal ambitions for the greater good of the nation, there would be some very long and very deep thoughts in Washington as to the capacity of Viet-Nam for self-government.

11. I then said I shared the concern of those who felt that this matter ought to be cleared up. I believed it had been dragging along to a point where further delay could be actually harmful. I told Ky that I planned to tell General Thieu that, while we obviously were not taking sides, the matter of who the military favored for President should be settled, that further temporizing was harmful and that to settle this question would clear the air. It seemed to me that one way to do it was in conversation between Thieu and Ky, either alone at first or with the other Generals all in the same room. It was a time to be frank and no one needed to lose face. (*Comment: Ky had stressed to me how strongly he felt he did not want General Thieu to lose face. End comment.*)

12. Ky then said he wanted to say something to me confidentially in the light of our close relationship, which was that when [garble—Ky?] on the day the Armed Forces Council met to ratify the Constitution, had said he would support Thieu if Thieu decided to accept, that at that time the Generals would have accepted Ky's word and would have supported Thieu. But now, he said, Thieu's hesitation has created a problem. They have lost confidence in him.

13. I asked what would they do if Thieu was the candidate and Ky was not. Would they support a civilian? Ky said he didn't know.

14. *Comment:* I intend to see Thieu and tell him that we think the question of the "military candidate" should be settled.<sup>4</sup>

Lodge

<sup>4</sup> Lodge saw Thieu on April 21. During the meeting Lodge informed him that although the U.S. Government would not intervene to decide who should be the military candidate, it was "concerned by the unsettling effect of this prolonged uncertainty" over the issue. Thieu replied that he previously had told the members of the Directorate that he would "be available" as a candidate if they gave him their support on a personal basis. He expected to announce his candidacy by May 1. He also asked Lodge to inform Johnson that the Generals would not fight over the matter. "We now have absolutely categorical assurances from Thieu and Ky that they are not going to have clash," Lodge reported. (Telegram 23667 from Saigon, April 21; *ibid.*) In an April 21 covering memorandum transmitting a copy of telegram 23667 to the President, Rostow observed that Thieu apparently had the "Presidential bug." He believed, however, that Thieu and Ky would "work it out." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Nodis Vol. V (A)) The Department remained concerned, however, that a leadership struggle would erupt after Lodge's departure and before Bunker's arrival in Saigon as the new Ambassador. In telegram 180382 to Kathmandu, Saigon, and New Delhi, April 21 (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 17 US-VIET S) and in telegram 180656 to Kathmandu, April 22, the Department advised Bunker to report to Saigon immediately after Lodge's departure. (*Ibid.*, POL 15-1 VIET S) Bunker was in Nepal visiting his wife, Ambassador Carol Laise.

### 139. Editorial Note

On April 20, 1967, U.S. planes attacked targets in the previously restricted area of Haiphong. The objective of the strikes was to destroy two additional thermal power plants which generated electricity used by key military installations in the Hanoi-Haiphong area. However, the administration was quick to point out that the new round of bombings was not an expansion of the war. (Telegram 178696 to London, Tokyo, Manila, Seoul, Canberra, Wellington, and Bangkok, April 20; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27 VIET S) These strikes had been postponed twice during the President's absence from Washington: first, April 10-14, when he was attending the Organization of American States conference in Punta del Este, Uruguay, and second, April 14-18, when he was vacationing at the LBJ Ranch in Texas. In telegram 175129 to Secretary Rusk, Tosec 137, April 14, William Bundy and Nicholas Katzenbach unsuccessfully argued that the attacks should be further delayed as such military action would make the upcoming SEATO meeting and a conference of the troop-contributing nations appear to be "war councils." They also believed that the strikes would push the British still further toward a less supportive position on Vietnam. (*Ibid.*)

Expanded strikes against North Vietnamese military targets quickly followed the attack on the power plants. These bombings, approved by the President on April 22, began on April 24 as the RT 55 strikes during which two key enemy airfields (at Hoa Lac and Kep) were attacked for the first time in order to reduce the enemy's air defense capability. See Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968*, Part III, pages 41-5-41-8.

### 140. Memorandum of Conversation<sup>1</sup>

Washington, April 20, 1967.

#### SUBJECT

U.S. April 19 Proposal Affecting the DMZ in Vietnam

<sup>1</sup> Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, General File, April 1967. Secret. Drafted by Roy on April 21. The conversation is also reported in telegram 179762 to Moscow, April 21. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, FA/ACA Files: Lot 69 D 277, Vietnam File-Soviet, Communist Positions & Institutions, 1067)

## 232. Memorandum From the Ambassador's Special Assistant (Lansdale) to the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker)<sup>1</sup>

Saigon, July 7, 1967.

### SUBJECT

Talk with Thang, July 6

I saw General Nguyen duc Thang the afternoon of July 6, largely at the request of Arch Calhoun who was compiling some information from Mission sources. Here are highlights of our talk:

*Agreement.* I probed for details of any agreement between Chief of State Thieu and Prime Minister Ky on how much authority Ky would have as Vice President, over the Cabinet and RVNAF. Thang said that there is only a vague understanding, to the best of his knowledge, and feels that Ky is uneasy about the vagueness. Thang recalls that, when this subject came up during the final hours of deciding the Thieu-Ky coalition, Thieu indicated that Ky would have a large say in Cabinet and RVNAF appointments "because we are brothers in the family." Thang knew of no further clarification. He guessed that there hadn't been any, since Ky and the four Corps Commanders, who were meeting with Thieu the afternoon of July 6, had implied in their talk at the Palace earlier in the day that Thieu owed them a debt. (I gave this information orally to Arch Calhoun.)

*Disfavor.* Thang commented that General Thieu could be expected to harbor a grudge against three individuals for a long time. Thieu will be unable to forgive General Loan for what he believes were threats against his life, General Tri for the way he belittled Thieu on radio and TV, and General Thang for what he believes were acts that made Thieu lose prestige in the Army (telling Thieu that the Generals wouldn't back him against Ky, and Thang's statements during the confrontation).

*Proposal.* Thang said that Prime Minister Ky had talked to him the morning of July 6 about staying on in the Army, rather than retiring at the end of the year. Ky asked Thang to consider taking over the Political Warfare Directorate, after the September elections.<sup>2</sup> Thang asked

<sup>1</sup> Source: Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, Lansdale (1967-1968). Secret; Sensitive. Copies were sent to Locke, Westmoreland, Komer, Calhoun, Hart, and Jacobson.

<sup>2</sup> In telegram 347 from Saigon, July 5, Bunker reported that Thang had attacked Thieu for his "trickiness and indecisiveness" at the June 29-30 meeting of ARVN Generals. Bunker also reported that Ky suggested to Thang that he become Chief of the JCS if Vien became Minister of Defense. National Archives and Records Administration, RG

me what I thought of this idea. I replied that Thang already knew that I believed he must continue serving his country and should not retire. As for the Polwar Directorate, it was a nice but ineffective spot for a real leader, which I believe Thang to be—unless given some disciplinary authority. His opposite number, on the enemy side, would have equal authority with combat commanders, with a parallel chain-of-command, and participate in top policy decisions—and it would be unrealistic to expect to match his effectiveness with something not designed to match it. I expressed a personal opinion that Thang should be given a command position, where he could exercise leadership to help his country, if he returns to the Army.

*Ministry.* I pushed Thang again about considering staying on in the Ministry. He refused to budge from his decision to leave when an elected Constitutional Government takes office, although he admitted that he has no real thoughts yet on who might replace him and keep the fine work going after he has left. However, he reaffirmed his pledge to me that he would keep working hard at his Ministry tasks until the end.

## 233. Editorial Note

Secretary of Defense McNamara, along with Under Secretary of State Katzenbach and JCS Chairman General Wheeler, visited Vietnam July 7-11, 1967, at the request of the President to work out the Program V force package. The first briefing that the delegation received after arriving in Saigon was by Ambassador Bunker, followed in succession by General Westmoreland and his aides. For the record of these meetings, see U.S. House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967*, Book 5, pages 192-209. For McNamara's reaction to the briefings, see his autobiographical account entitled *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, 1995), page 283. The authors of the *Pentagon Papers* described the meetings as follows:

"The sum total of the briefings did not vary from what McNamara had heard so many times before: that there was an increasing NVA presence in control of the war; that it was increasingly becoming a main force battle; that the sanctuaries were becoming increasingly important to the enemy both for the logistics and the tactical advantages they offered. It was clear that MACV's view of the war in these terms, as increasingly a main force battle to be fought by American units, had con-

conducted 1,658 operations, from which 2,340 reports were produced. A total of 814 VC captured in these operations provided substantial information on the VC organization, from hamlet to province level.

11. *Inter-Agency and Combined Intelligence Activities*: In addition to the above programs, we are engaged in a series of other activities against the Communist organization which are undertaken on a combined and/or joint basis with MACV and the GVN:

a. *District Operations Intelligence Coordination Centers (DOICC)*: During the latter part of 1966, our Station undertook the creation of district coordination centers, and established several prototypes in I Corps. These centers, established with the cooperation and support of the US Marine units in the area, include participation of all Vietnamese intelligence collection agencies operating locally. The purpose of the centers is to break down the mutual jealousies and poor coordination practices of the Vietnamese agencies, to function as information clearing houses and collation centers, and to eliminate delays in dissemination of information. This concept has proven successful and is now being applied in many districts throughout Vietnam.

b. *Combined MR IV Task Force*: This organization was established in December 1966 to provide an intelligence collation and coordination center for the VC Military Region IV (Saigon, Cholon, Gia Dinh, and immediate environs). It is staffed by Vietnamese, MACV, and CIA personnel and data collected is incorporated in the MACV machine records repository for prompt retrieval. We understand that this concept is being expanded into II Corps.

c. *Screening Operations*: In conjunction with the Vietnamese Police Special Branch, our Station organizes support for combat units in screening detainees and refugees, mainly in the various cordon and search type operations. Mobile screening centers have been created to facilitate this support. Police Special Branch develops suspect lists from information from all of the foregoing programs, and provides interrogation and check-point support for military units. These techniques have succeeded in identifying numerous Viet Cong detained in the course of operations, and have the effect of denying the VC the ability to hide among the population.

d. *Infrastructure Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation Structure (ICEX)*: This new staff structure is designed to bring all the foregoing programs, as well as a number of MACV programs, under the operational control of Deputy to COMUSMACV for CORDS (Ambassador Komer) and into an integrated and sharply-focused attack on the VC organization. ICEX coordinators (CIA Regional Officers) have been appointed to the staffs of Senior Corps Advisors, and to the staffs of Sector Advisors (CIA or MACV officers), in order to achieve unified line of command and a sharp stimulation of activities.

12. *Conclusion*: In short, though much remains to be done, there are programs already in operation directed against the hamlet and population-mass level Communist target in addition to existing or newly developed programs directed against the formal organizational structure whose lowest command unit is the village committee.

GW Allen<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> George Allen signed for George Carver above Carver's typed signature.

258. **Memorandum From the Minister-Counselor for Political Affairs of the Embassy in Vietnam (Calhoun) to the Deputy for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Komer)**<sup>1</sup>

Saigon, July 27, 1967.

SUBJECT

Coping with Corruption

REFERENCE

Your Memorandum of July 6, this Subject<sup>2</sup>

1. I have read with interest your suggestions to the Inter-Agency Committee on Corruption for the collection of information on GVN officials who are believed, but not proven, to be corrupt, on the basis of which American advisors would refuse all but minimum contact and cooperation. The Committee's reply has been discussed with me and I have also noted General Lansdale's thoughtful comments on this matter.<sup>3</sup>

2. I agree that the level of corruption in Viet-Nam has reached a point where, as you point out, it has become a key obstacle to pacifica-

<sup>1</sup> Source: Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, GVN Corruption 1967. Secret; Noform.

<sup>2</sup> In this attached July 6 memorandum to the Chairman of the Embassy's Corruption Committee, Thomas Dunlap, Komer suggested blacklisting GVN officials believed to be engaged in corruption and then instructing U.S. advisers to avoid them. By this mechanism, the identified individuals would "lose face."

<sup>3</sup> Lansdale's July 21 memorandum to Komer, Calhoun, and Dunlap noted the opportunity presented to address the corruption issue by a provision in the new Constitution for an "Inspectorate." He argued that this organization should be encouraged and

tion. We must find a way to reduce it, and we must act more vigorously than we have done. General Lansdale has addressed himself to some of the steps we might consider in the coming weeks to encourage and assist responsible elements within the GVN to seize the opportunities offered by the new governmental framework to act against corrupt elements. This point was touched upon briefly in the Committee's reply. I think we ought also to look more carefully at what we Americans can do to reduce the incentives and opportunities for corruption. Among these measures might be the relocation and careful control of bars and brothels frequented by Americans, and the reduction of piaster expenditures by civilian as well as military personnel. The restoration of "sign-off" or veto authority over the distribution of USAID commodities to American Provincial Advisors would seem desirable, although I understand from USAID that we may have to seek Congressional action to make "sign-off" meaningful. I believe we must keep our concern over corruption continuously before GVN officials at the highest level.

3. The discreet collection of credible although unproven reports about corrupt GVN officials as suggested by you and agreed upon by the Committee may prove useful and I am quite agreeable to its compilation by the Committee.

4. I think it is evident, however, that the uses to which this information might be put, as well as the means which would be necessary to verify much of it, raise fundamental questions concerning the relationship of our Government with the GVN. As the Committee points out, in order to effect rapid reduction in corruption the United States would have to acquire, and be willing to exercise, at least the power to veto appointments of Province Chiefs and ARVN officers of divisional commander rank and responsibility. The assumption of such sweeping prerogatives entails an invasion of the sovereignty of the Republic of Viet-Nam so great that it could and would be argued thereafter that United States is indeed the neo-colonialist power its critics and enemies allege it to be.

5. Our policy in Viet-Nam has been and is based on different, indeed quite contrary, premises. We have believed that self-determination is good for the Vietnamese people and that the exercise of control by outsiders is bad; we have believed that lasting changes for the better in Vietnamese society must be brought about by the Vietnamese themselves, with our aid, encouragement, and prodding, but not at our discretion. I believe that the more representative government which is emerging in Viet-Nam must be the vehicle for eliminating the social evils which beset the people. I do not think we can or should do this job for them.

6. It may be argued that there are many Vietnamese who, despairing of the present situation, are ready to accept any change, no matter how radical, that would bring about a more stable and prosperous government.

though I recognize that there are some Vietnamese who feel that way, and that among them are able and dedicated patriots, I do not believe that most Vietnamese do. The majority would detest us for such a takeover and our enemies would benefit by exploiting this feeling.

7. I might add that it is my opinion that even if we should wish to assume such sweeping powers, I doubt our ability to exercise them effectively. Our personnel are not trained nor our people motivated to carry out the police and administrative functions the assumption of such sovereign power would entail.

8. I believe the Committee has accurately defined the degree of control which the US would have to exercise to effect a rapid and dramatic reduction in the level of corruption in Viet-Nam. I do not think it would be wise for us to seek such control.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In a memorandum of July 27 to Komer, the Committee responded at length to the concerns raised in his July 6 memorandum. For any measures against corruption to be effective in the short term, the Committee concluded that "a major change in the relationship between the United States Government and the Government of Viet Nam would be necessary." The necessary "leverage" in order to ensure progress would involve U.S. Mission veto power over the appointment of province chiefs and division commanders. The "blacklist" concept was adopted, although any such findings would be termed instead "incident reports." (Ibid.)

## 259. Memorandum of Meeting<sup>1</sup>

Washington, July 28, 1967, 3 p.m.

### PARTICIPANTS

Mr. E. Rostow  
Gov. Harriman  
Mr. Hughes  
Mr. Habib  
Mr. Read  
Mr. Cooper

Mr. Habib provided a run-down of the South Vietnamese elections. Habib stressed that our Mission in Saigon was well aware of the importance of a fair election, and he cited some favorable omens (such as the new Press law) which should offset the impression that the elec-

<sup>1</sup> Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 14 VIET S. Top Secret; Exdis. Drafted by Cooper. The meeting was held in



1. *Withholding U.S. Support:* At levels below Saigon, the authority of U.S. senior advisors to cut off or withdraw U.S. civil and military support from Vietnamese activities or operations within their area of responsibility would constitute powerful leverage. To achieve a posture of graduated response, the advisor could have available to him such varied instruments as the right to grant or withhold access to air transportation for the province chief, U.S. firepower, mobility, and medical evacuation for particular RVNAF units, and over-all military and civil support for an entire province or program, including withdrawal of an entire U.S. advisory team.

At the Saigon level, a range of extremely tough options is available, encompassing selective withdrawal of U.S. support for Viet-Nam. Persuading the GVN that these are in fact available, requires the will to use them and the political ability to follow through if our hand is called. Options would include halting further troop deployments, standing down U.S. unit operations, suspending CIP and MAP assistance, and so forth.

Rusk

### 302. Memorandum From the Ambassador's Special Assistant (Lansdale) to the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker)<sup>1</sup>

Saigon, September 2, 1967.

#### SUBJECT

Talk with Thieu, September 2

As you know, Chief of State Nguyen van Thieu asked me to "come right over" to Independence Palace, the morning of September 2. I did so and had an hour-long talk with him privately. He had no urgent problems to discuss. I had the feeling that he was looking for a little reassurance, on the eve of the election. We talked mostly about the future of Viet Nam.

I did, however, alert him to the dangers of mishandling the detention of Colonel Pham van Lieu, with so huge a contingent of journalists in town seeking a news story, and suggested that Lieu be detained personally by someone such as General Vien or General Vy

<sup>1</sup> Source: Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, Lansdale (1967-1968).

rather than at MSS headquarters, where journalists could speculate that he was being mistreated. Thieu said he knew very little about the case, other than charges that Lieu had been handing out leaflets supporting Presidential candidate Phan khac Suu at the NCO Academy in Nha Trang, which Lieu commands; the thought was to hold Lieu for five days in Saigon, away from his command, until the elections are over, as a "military disciplinary measure." I commented that it could become a sensational incident and urged Thieu to act. He then spoke to his staff, presumably about the handling of Lieu.

Also, Thieu said that his brother Kieu had talked to him about candidates issuing a joint statement to the people on Election Eve. Thieu felt that such evidence of patriotic unity would be a good thing, but that the other candidates would suspect that Thieu had some trick up his sleeve and would refuse to sign it. Thus, Thieu was issuing his own statement today (presumably by radio) which would stress the need for honesty in the election, and would urge people to vote. I said that it would be wise in this statement to request specifically those in positions of power—Corps Commanders and Province and District Chiefs—to do their best to insure free and fair elections. Thieu nodded seemingly in agreement.

Here are highlights of other matters discussed:

—The militant Buddhists of the An Quang Pagoda seemed to Thieu to be the major source of dissension in the immediate post-election period. I suggested that Thieu might use his brother Kieu and others to turn the energies and scheming wits of the An Quang leaders into more constructive channels, such as into social welfare projects; the GVN could help, as feasible; the An Quang leaders would be attracted by this as a means of building up their organization, and it would be wise for the GVN to introduce some more moderate elements into such an enterprise, influencing while cooperating. Thieu said that this was worth considering further, because the only moves he had thought of so far were to either jail them or let them become an open opposition.

—Thieu described his concept of pacification, frankly admitting that he was thinking of how Ngo dinh Nhu had run it under President Diem. Thieu felt that it should be his own priority business, if he is elected President, with a Deputy to run the nuts-and-bolts daily business, probably as Vice Prime Minister. He sketched out a "chain of command" from the President directly to Province Chiefs, but with Corps Commanders holding regional responsibility. I commented that this seemed to be a fuzzy "chain of command" and that I had grave doubts about the ability of Corps Commanders to understand the role of the people in "people's warfare," which is a fundamental need in pacification. I pointed out that Nhu had become lost in theories, by not being in touch with the people, and the tragedy of this held a lesson for



Thieu that was worth heeding. Thieu agreed that it was easy to be fooled by Province Chiefs, since some are not only able administrators but able liars as well. Thieu then said that he was thinking of having an Operations Room in the Palace. We talked about maps, types of data, communications, the Malayan Red Book experience, and similar details for a time.

—Thieu said that he wanted General Nguyen duc Thang to take over responsibility for RF and PF forces, as one of the major elements in pacification. We discussed Thang at some length. I stressed how a President and Commander-in-Chief could best deal with a strong leader such as Thang, for the good of the country. I described how support would have to be given and mutual respect and trust earned. I gave him my personal evaluation of Thang as a developing leader who could make a Thieu Administration succeed in this decisive moment of Viet Nam's history, if Thieu acted with the wise leadership he himself would be in position to exert.

—This led into a discussion of his relations with Nguyen cao Ky. I commented that Thieu should be ready to discover that he himself had suddenly become a different man on the morning of September 4, if elected President. In the past, he had been too reserved, awaiting the moves of others. In the future, Thieu would have to take the first step towards working closely with others, such as Ky; if not, he would find himself increasingly surrounded by sycophantic "yes men" and schemers. We then talked for a time about how Thieu could develop better personal relations with Ky and others, to gain real teamwork in the future. I also suggested some ways he could become closer to the people, when he travelled in the countryside.

—We then talked about the evolution of political parties, including the part played in this process by both the Senate and the Lower House. I stressed the attitude the new President would have to take, to encourage the emergence into public life of the present clandestine concept of political organizations in Viet Nam, and the growth of various groups into more unified national parties that had structures in villages and precincts.

—I asked about the composition of his Administration, if he becomes President. Thieu laughed and said, "go ahead and give me a lecture about a 'broadly based Government'." He explained that "this is what Americans talk to me about." I commented that they probably were thinking about some of the hard bumps and crises ahead. Thieu replied that he was thinking of them also. Then, Thieu's aide came in and reminded Thieu that he was running far behind schedule. Thieu asked to be excused, shook hands with me rather emotionally (taking my hand in both of his tightly), and thanked me for the talk. I left, noting that there were people waiting him in the anteroom and in the main hall.

### 303. Editorial Note

In general elections held on September 3, 1967, the South Vietnamese people elected Nguyen Van Thieu as President and Nguyen Cao Ky as Vice President. The vote for the Thieu-Ky ticket was 1,638,902, or 34.8 percent of the total cast. Opposition tickets headed by Truong Dinh Dzu, Phan Khac Suu, and Tran Van Huong received, respectively, 17.2 percent, 10.8 percent, and 10 percent of the total vote cast. An analysis contained in Ambassador Bunker's weekly telegram to President Johnson noted that a large portion of the vote for the Thieu-Ky ticket came from areas outside the large urban centers, while the other candidates led in the major cities, as evidenced by the fact that Suu received the most votes in cities such as Hue and Danang and Huong received more votes than Thieu in Saigon. The members of the Senate were chosen at this time, while elections for the House of Representatives were to be held on October 22. "The Presidential election results speak for themselves and will go far to answer the earlier charges that the government was guilty of improper activities during the campaign and would manipulate the results," Bunker suggested. Bunker's full analysis of the election is in his 19th weekly report to the President, telegram 5060 from Saigon, September 6. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27 VIET S; printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pages 147-159)

The President had sent a mission to Vietnam to observe the elections first-hand. The observer group numbered two dozen individuals, including Governors, Senators, labor and business leaders, and journalists. A full list of the group's members is in telegram 26112 to Saigon, August 24. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 14 VIET S) According to Johnson's Daily Diary, he met with the election observers on September 6 from 11:06 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. (Johnson Library) Jim Jones' notes of this meeting are *ibid.*, Meeting Notes File, Sept. 6, '67-Mtg. With VN Election Observers. No other record has been found. Walt Rostow cabled the group's positive assessment to Bunker in telegram CAP 67759, September 7. (*Ibid.*, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, White House Cables-Back Channels-Incoming, Outgoing)

On September 8 the President wrote to Thieu:

"I extend my warm regards to you and to Prime Minister Ky on your victory in the election of a President and Vice President. I have just received a detailed and most moving account of your election from the distinguished Americans whom you invited to Viet-Nam as observers. They returned believing in the fairness of the procedures and observed the intense interest of the Vietnamese people in this major step toward meeting your own popularly chosen and constitutionally

based government. Their individual reports were a testimonial to the courage and determination of the Vietnamese people to remain free and to create their own political institutions in their own way. The election was a milestone along the path toward the goal you have set for yourselves—a free, secure and peaceful Viet-Nam. But it is not the end of the journey. Many hard tasks remain. Not the least of these now is the creation of a strong, effective and broadly based government that will help you and your country achieve the objectives you set forth in your campaign. The American government and I, personally, look forward to continued close cooperation with you and your colleagues in the days and months ahead. I am confident that our efforts—joined with those of our allies—will be crowned with success and that under your leadership, a peaceful, democratic, strong and prosperous Viet-Nam will emerge.”

This letter was sent to Saigon in telegram 34017, September 8. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 15-1 VIET S) Thieu, who received the letter on September 9 from Bunker, acknowledged the President's communication in his own letter of thanks dated September 26 but received from the Vietnamese Embassy by the Department of State on October 10 and then forwarded to the White House. (Ibid.)

304. Memorandum From William J. Jorden of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow)<sup>1</sup>

Washington, September 5, 1967.

SUBJECT

Priorities in Viet-Nam Under a New Government

Thieu and Ky are in. What should they now do? What should we push?

The *first* order of business should be formation of a *new government*.

It should be broadly based. Strenuous efforts should be made to pull in some leading candidates or those close to them. Huong should

be pressed. Also Dr. Dan (Suu's VP candidate). Also Dr. Vien, present Deputy PM and close to Huong.<sup>2</sup>

*Second* priority—establishing close and good relations with the new Assembly. In the long run, this can only be done if the Government begins organizing a *political party* and enlisting significant legislators.

*Third*—a matter of internal importance and significant impact here and abroad—an *approach to the VC and the Front*: Lay down your arms and stop the killing; join the nation; personal and political rights will be assured. A national reconciliation commission should be set up.

*Fourth*—an approach to Hanoi. This will have to follow up on Thieu's campaign promise. But it should be—or appear to be—more than a propaganda gimmick. They should be urged not to rush in without planning. My preference would be for a quiet diplomatic approach. Emphasis should be on talk “among us Vietnamese.” An open offer of a one-week pause would be rejected out of hand by Hanoi. This is no time to play games. If Hanoi is willing to talk with the GVN, a bombing pause could enter into the talks. If it breaks this way (talks in Paris, Phnom Penh, or wherever), we should go to the Russians and urge them to put up or shut up, get Hanoi to consider a real response; we would agree to halt bombing first if Hanoi's need is for face-saving. The gut question: are they in a mood to cut down their involvement in the South?

There are distinct advantages in letting the new GVN take the lead in moving down a diplomatic track. And my judgment is that they are now in a mood as never before.

We should, meantime, be going forward with our own efforts—of which I judge the Oslo channel is the most promising.

The *worst* approach right now:

Go to the GVN with a huge shopping list of things to do, programs to push. This has been the pattern over the years; it doesn't work.

Let's hit them with a few high priority items first. We should also sort out *new* things they can do (appeal to the Front; approach to Hanoi; political party organization) and the *old* things we want to see move ahead (improvement of ARVN, anti-corruption campaign, RD, land reform, etc.).

On the *approach to Hanoi*, it may be that Thieu will feel obliged to do it soon and to do it publicly.

If so, we should urge him to wait long enough for some preplanning and preparations. *Before* any statement by Saigon, we should have a chance to hit U Thant, the Russians, the Indians, Poles, Indonesians,

<sup>1</sup> Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Misc. Memos, Vol. 3B. Secret.

initiative in the Security Council. We risk facing a situation in which an amendment to our resolution would condemn our bombing policy. Our friends, put in an impossible position, might well choose to abstain. If you knew in advance you could not get a satisfactory resolution, the debate resulting from this effort would not contribute to a peaceful climate.

Ambassador Goldberg: If we took an initiative, the Security Council would flounder in a state of disagreement.

The President: In the event this happened, would we be ahead of where we now are? Senator Mansfield would probably say, yes, we would be; but the Senator does not see clearly all the evils which are predicted. We should wait till Mansfield gets back from Japan to talk to him candidly about the situation as we see it. Those who urged us to take an initiative would say, after the effort failed, they didn't realize that the situation would develop as it had.

[Here follows discussion on arms control and a number of other issues unrelated to Vietnam.]

Bromley Smith

### 320. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State<sup>1</sup>

Saigon, September 13, 1967, 1015Z.

5825. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my twentieth weekly telegram:

#### A. General

1. With the elections for President, Vice President, and the Senate behind us cries of anguish have gone up from some of the defeated candidates. Eight of the defeated Presidential candidates issued a written statement declaring that the elections had been fraudulent and that the signers would request the National Assembly to invalidate the elections. Tran Van Huong and Ha Thuc Ky did not join in the declara-

<sup>1</sup> Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Received at 7:28 a.m. A notation on the covering memorandum from Rostow transmitting a copy of this telegram to the President indicates that he received it at 5:30 p.m. and that the President saw it. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8B(1) [B]) This telegram is printed

tions. In a second rather general declaration issued yesterday, six of the candidates (Phan Khac Suu, Hoang Co Binh, Truong Dinh Dzu, Tran Van Ly, Nguyen Hoa Hiep, and Vu Hong Khanh) again denounced the "dishonest practices of this government," the failure of the government ticket to receive more than 35 percent of the total vote in spite of the exertion of pressure and illegal practices, exhorting the people to speak out against this suppression and pointing out to the people and Government of the United States that the policy carried out in Viet-Nam must conform with the will of the Vietnamese people, that otherwise it will be doomed to "bitter and total failure." The prime beneficiary of concerted action by the defeated candidates would be Truong Dinh Dzu, who ran second, and I believe the other candidates have only limited interest in helping Dzu to further his personal ambitions.

2. Among the Presidential protesters, Dzu seems to be the most active. He ran a notice in the Saigon *Daily News* yesterday morning "apologizing for having missed a meeting with Charles Doe and informs all foreign newsmen that he is available at any time, mornings from 9 to 12:30 at his law office and afternoons at his house from lunch time to 5:00 p.m. Thank you in advance." He apparently has little else to do.

3. In addition to complaints by the Presidential candidates, one has been filed by an Assembly Deputy, Trieu Van Tuc, and four by voters.

4. Some other protest voices have also been heard. Four student groups have jointly declared that the elections were "rigged and arranged by a foreign hand." Militant Buddhist leaders told a meeting at the An Quang pagoda on September 9 that the elections had been rigged, but their strongest condemnation was against the government for having signed the new Buddhist charter. I suspect that the government will act to prevent any serious difficulties by such elements.

5. The press in general seems to be taking a more responsible view of the election results than have most of the defeated candidates. The general view taken by the press of the elections seems to be one of a job well done. A number of papers have commented on the need for national solidarity and for the losing candidates to form a loyal opposition. *Thoi Dai* very sensibly told the losers to either cooperate with the government or form an opposition bloc.

6. It does not seem to us that the complaints, fifteen in all, have much substance, or that they provide adequate grounds for invalidation of the elections. However, the losers are not only dissatisfied, but are taking it hard and may give us some difficult moments before the election results are finally certified.

7. The Assembly meets today to announce the temporary results

on violations of the election laws have been submitted to it and the Central Election Council has examined complaints with respect to the conduct of the voting. The Assembly must vote by October 2 at the latest on the validity of the elections. While, as I have said, in our judgment it is very doubtful that the Assembly will be able to document to any degree of thoroughness the charges that the Presidential election was rigged, Deputies have not always voted in the past strictly on the basis of facts. In this instance, other pressures and interests could play a significant role in the way they vote. Ky, if he were so inclined could, for example, instruct 30 or so Deputies loyal to him to vote against validation in an effort to discredit or unseat Thieu or he could simply threaten to do so in an effort to exact concessions from Thieu. The eight Deputies who ran on the upper house slate associated with Dzu could also pose a problem as could scattered oppositionists who did not have a stake in orderly Constitutional development.

8. Our initial reading of the mood of the Assembly is that the followers of Tran Van Huong and Ha Thuc Ky will not engage in any efforts to discredit the elections, partly because they hope to be represented in Thieu's government and because one of Ha Thuc Ky's upper house slates has been elected. The combined strength of their followers in the Assembly is about 30 Deputies. The mood of the pro-GVN democratic alliance bloc, the largest bloc in the Assembly, is at this stage harder to gauge. Only two out of the more than 20 members of the bloc who ran for the upper house did so successfully. Piqued by their failure and with an uncertain political future, they might go along with the mood to throw out the elections.

9. We are taking the line with the Deputies that the question of validation is very serious and that unless there is extensive, substantial evidence that the election was rigged, the election of Thieu should be validated. We are also volunteering our impression, based on extensive observation not only by ourselves and our observers but observers from the other countries, that the election was an honest one and that if any cheating took place, it did not affect the outcome. In talking with Thieu yesterday, I impressed on him that a bit of judiciously applied GVN pressure and persuasion would appear to be in order.

10. Only this morning in talking with Ky, I brought up the subject of the Assembly attitude toward the elections. He recalled that he told me before the campaign started that we should expect some protests and disorders after the elections, especially from the An Quang Buddhists and perhaps students also who had been stirred up by the Buddhists, and remarked that a student demonstration was taking place while we were talking. He said that these demonstrations are confined to a relatively small group of so-called leaders in Saigon, but

dent it would remain so. He said that he understood fully the importance of responsible action by the Assembly in performing its function in regard to the elections and understood what the effect would be on opinion in the United States and elsewhere should it fail to act responsibly. He assured me that means were available to him and the GVN to see that the members acted responsibly and he proposed to do so. This is reassuring in view of some rumors that have come to us that Ky, feeling that he had been snubbed by Thieu and dissatisfied with the way in which the latter was going about the formation of his government, might use his influence to upset the results. He assured me that he had no intention whatever of taking any such irresponsible action.

11. In this immediate post election period the first order of business has been to focus on the effort to put together the new government. There is inevitably a period of maneuvering in which conflicting interests held in check during the campaign period begin to emerge. The Thieu-Ky relationship is being subjected to strain heightened, I fear, by the entourage of each in their attempt to promote their own interests and positions.

12. This has centered around differences of opinion between them regarding appointments to Cabinet posts and Ky's own responsibilities in the new government. These problems were discussed at a meeting of the inner circle of Generals with Thieu and Ky last Monday.<sup>2</sup> The issues were not resolved then and it was agreed that another meeting would be held on Saturday, the 16th.<sup>3</sup>

13. The post of Prime Minister is still open. Thieu informed me yesterday that he had offered the post to Tran Van Huong who had turned it down, Thieu said, on the ground that he did not want to serve with Ky. Thieu expressed some relief that Huong had refused since he believed that Huong would find it difficult to work as a member of a team. He is now looking for a capable civilian, a Southerner, preferably a Buddhist, to fill the position. Ky is still insisting on Nguyen Van Loc whom Thieu does not feel has either the stature or the capacity for the job. We are inclined to agree with his estimate.

14. The other matter is Ky's own role and responsibility in the government. He expressed to me this morning his keen disappointment that Thieu had not made any approach to him on this, and said that he had made it very clear when he accepted the Vice Presidential spot that he would not be content with being merely a figurehead for the next four years. If this were to be the case, he would return to the air force. I have constantly urged Thieu to be forthcoming in regard to his relationship with Ky and have said that I would expect that he

<sup>2</sup> September 11.

would make good use of Ky's energy, abilities, and talents. I have suggested to him, for example, that Ky might be given responsibility for coordination of all of the pacification programs within the government. Yesterday I urged Thieu and this morning Ky to get together and work out this problem openly and frankly between themselves.

15. One of the difficulties has been that members of their entourages out of self-interest try to exacerbate the rivalry. We have a report that at a meeting of the inner circle last Monday, Thieu and Ky agreed that they would dismiss any member of their entourages found to be spreading rumors designed to deepen the rift between them. We are following this matter closely, using both persuasion and some judicious pressure and I have confidence that this can be worked out by the Vietnamese themselves just as the problem of the single military ticket was resolved last June.

16. Both Thieu and Ky are in agreement that the government must be given a new face and that it must put forward a dynamic program which will enlist the enthusiasm and support of the people. In this connection we are developing a statement of suggested policies and programs which we intend to put in their hands for use in preparation of a statement or declaration to the people of the new government's program.<sup>4</sup>

#### B. Political

17. After all the time and effort that went into the preparation and organization of the Presidential and Senate elections, it is not surprising that they have continued to dominate political developments during the past week.

18. As I reported on Sept 9 (Saigon 5550),<sup>5</sup> I delivered your warm and encouraging message to Gen Thieu the previous evening. Sub-

<sup>4</sup> In a September 10 memorandum to the Ambassador, Lansdale suggested ways to advise and assist the newly-constituted GVN. He cautioned against the application of direct pressure on the Vietnamese leadership due to nationalistic pride and political inexperience. He suggested that small, informal lunches between top Vietnamese and American officials would provide the best means for jointly deciding upon critical actions, which included cooperation between Thieu and Ky, formation of a broadly-based government with integral civilian participation, and removal of Corps commanders from political responsibilities. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8D 6/67-1/69, Mission Council Action Memos) Bunker also advised against applying too much pressure on the GVN leaders. In telegram CAS 254 from Saigon, September 9, he wrote: "I believe that they thoroughly understand this point, and, if anything, it has been made too often and too openly to them. There is only so much that the traffic will bear at any one time. I believe that further explicit pressure may be counterproductive and that we must leave to them the exact way in which they bring this about." (Ibid., White House Cables-Back Channels-Incoming, Outgoing)

<sup>5</sup> In this telegram, Bunker reported that Thieu displayed "a slight sensitivity" when he read the part of the President's letter relating to the creation of a broadly-based government. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 15-1 VIET)

stantial portions of your message have been prominently displayed in the Saigon press. Thieu himself has no reservations about the desirability of a broadly-based government with predominantly civilian representation, and is himself deeply involved in negotiations with his recent opponents to achieve this objective. He is fully aware of the complicated personal and political problems involved. In addition to the offer made to Huong, Thieu also said that he planned to sound out Phan Khac Suu on a post in the government though he felt this would have to be pretty much in an honorary capacity because of Suu's physical and mental condition. In addition, Thieu told me he personally tried to find, among supporters of Huong, Suu, and Ha Thuc Ky, representatives whom they might suggest for government posts and who could be included.<sup>6</sup>

[Here follows discussion of additional political issues, the military effort, and pacification.]

Bunker

<sup>6</sup> As reported in telegram 5821, September 13, the previous evening Bunker discussed potential Cabinet members with Thieu. In addition, he broached the idea of an overture by the GVN to Hanoi. (Ibid.) In telegram CAS 358 from Saigon, September 14, Bunker cautioned that any such initiative had to be taken in close cooperation with the U.S. Government. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, White House Cables-Back Channels-Incoming, Outgoing)

#### 321. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State<sup>1</sup>

Paris, September 13, 1967, 1053Z.

3243. From Kissinger. I have some concern over the message I have been asked to transmit to Bo.<sup>2</sup> As I understand it, the purpose of the present effort is to determine whether Hanoi would be willing to enter productive negotiations if we stop bombing and other military activities against the North. In my view, the exchange with Hanoi should therefore, focus on this essential proposition. I am afraid that the last

<sup>1</sup> Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27-14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Flash; Nodis/Pennsylvania. Received at 7:49 a.m.