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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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September 22, 1962

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. McGEORGE BUNDY
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Suggested Topics for Discussion with Vietnamese
Secretary of State for the Presidency in Charge
of Security Coordination Nguyen dinh Thuan

1. The President may wish to raise some of the following topics
when Vietnamese Secretary of State Thuan calls on him at 10:00 o'clock
Tuesday morning, September 25.

(a) We admire the courage and determination of the Vietnamese
people in the face of brutal Communist attack. We will continue to
help the Vietnamese defend themselves.

(b) We are encouraged by the progress which Viet-Nam is
making with our help against the Viet Cong. We believe that the GVN
efforts to mobilize the people through the strategic hamlet program,
with its emphasis on giving the rural population both the means and
the will to defend themselves, is the key to ultimate victory. We
are pleased by reports that democracy is being introduced at the
hamlet level (election of hamlet officials by secret ballot) under
this program.

(c) Relations with Cambodia have a direct bearing on the
course of the war in Viet-Nam. We are pleased by reports that the
Vietnamese have taken the initiative in proposing a solution to the
old Indochina debt problem. (The French have since 1954 held about
\$15 million of blocked francs pending settlement of claims and counter
claims arising from the calling in of the old Indochina note issue and
Indochina debts. Cambodia stands to gain most by this settlement and
has threatened to break relations if the Vietnamese do not settle soon.
The GVN has suggested talks with all concerned and a tripartite request
from the three Indochina states to France to unblock the francs, pro-
vided Cambodia first releases a Vietnamese aircraft which they have held
since 1960. The Cambodians seem willing to release the aircraft.)

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E.O. 11652, Sec. 3(E) and 5(D)

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We urge that the GVN make every effort to assuage Sihanouk's fears that the Vietnamese have aggressive designs against his country. In particular we urge all possible measures to reduce border incidents. A first step in this direction might be the prompt dispatch of a military mission to Cambodia in response to Sihanouk's offer. (Sihanouk has offered to receive such missions and provide full facilities for them to investigate alleged Viet Cong use of Cambodian territory. He indicated to General Taylor that FARK officers would be assigned to this mission and that it might act as a mixed commission to investigate border incidents.)

(d) Diem has indicated that he is determined to withdraw the GVN representation from Vientiane if the RLG receives an Ambassador from Communist North Viet-Nam. Ambassador Nolting twice attempted to persuade Diem to keep the GVN mission in Vientiane, on the second occasion conveying President Kennedy's concern and hope that Diem would reconsider. The British Ambassador also urged Diem not to withdraw. Diem remained adamant, saying that his position of principle was his compelling reason; a two Viet-Nam solution in Vientiane would weaken the whole morale and fighting spirit of the Vietnamese. (Reuniting Viet-Nam has a powerful appeal to Vietnamese nationalism.) Thuan, however, has indicated understanding of our position. He told Department officials that he would send a cable to Saigon urging Diem to withdraw the GVN Ambassador in Vientiane for indefinite consultation while leaving the GVN mission there in place under a chargé.

(e) The time seems ripe for announcement of a nationwide amnesty program. Many Viet Cong are said to be recruited under duress. If they knew they could return home without punishment, many would probably defect. (Small scale local amnesty programs have been implemented, but the needed nationwide plan is stalled in the GVN bureaucracy.)

2. Thuan will likely want to give the President a brief report on the progress of the war in Viet-Nam. He is likely to warn of Communist efforts to promote a neutral solution for Viet-Nam; since the Viet Cong are being hurt by our joint efforts, their strategy may shift to stress political neutralization. He may also raise the question of crop destruction by defoliants. (The Vietnamese have repeatedly requested release of defoliants to destroy Viet Cong crops. We are concerned by the possible

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Walt Rostow considers this very important if it is carried out honestly and with careful planning.

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political results of using such a weapon in Asia, and the propaganda advantage it would afford the Communists all over the world, without assurance of seriously hurting the VC at this time. The matter is still under study.)

As I stated in my memorandum of August 29, to Mr. O'Donnell, Thuan will be accompanied by Chalmers B. Wood, the Director of the Viet-Nam Working Group.


William H. Brubeck
Executive Secretary

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