

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

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Notes on the Current Security Situation

On December 4, at 10:00 a.m.--an hour when a large number of golfers are usually in the clubhouse preparing for Sunday rounds of golf--a bomb exploded in the caddies' locker room. No Americans were killed, but one Vietnamese was killed and two were wounded. The MSUG Police Administration Division was asked to join the Sureté in an investigation. This investigation indicated that two employees had been in contact with the Viet Cong. So far as I know, responsibility has not definitely been assigned to the Viet Cong, but the indications are strong that it was an explosion produced by the Viet Cong.

Following this incident, additional security precautions were taken by the Sureté at American installations throughout the city. Protection at the American School and at the Cercle Sportif was also increased.

In recent weeks Americans have also been able to hear firing on the outskirts of the city at night. There are almost nightly attacks on police outposts around the edges of the city. Some Americans were particularly alarmed when sounds of a full-scale battle were heard while they were attending the theater for Americans, which is within ear-shot range of the 8th Precinct, across the Saigon River.

On the other hand, nerves of the Americans have calmed down somewhat since December 4 because there have been no such incidents as the bombing at the golf club. We have safely negotiated the dates of December 9-13, during which the Sureté took special precautions because they had heard that the Viet Cong might mount an attack on Saigon. The situation here leaves a number of families in doubt about sending home dependents. If no grave events occur it may well be that people will calm down again. The next few weeks, from this standpoint, are rather important.

There are several other items that may be mentioned, although sufficient details are lacking. One is the effect of the Laotian situation on Vietnam. Radio reports this morning indicate the burning of the Embassy and USOM in Vientiane and the flight of Westerners from the city. Actually, South Vietnam has already been affected by the long-term instability in Laos. Probably the recent Kontum invasion by North Vietnam troops could occur because these troops can move freely through Laos to attack South Vietnam. It is also quite conceivable that the action in Laos is only

part of a larger plan for communist activity in South Vietnam. It would be surprising if the communists did not take advantage of the situation to step up their infiltration of guerrillas in the countryside. They might even go so far as to move beyond guerrilla action.

Another factor that should be mentioned briefly is an increase in the amount of harassment to which Americans are subjected locally. There has, for example, been an increase in thefts from cars parked near the Commissary and in the scratching of paint on cars there. Also there have been more people coming around to our houses seeking to gain entrance by representing themselves as government officials of one sort or another. Finally, the communists have been cultivating the youth in private schools in Saigon. Some of these youth have inflicted verbal and minor physical assaults on American women. MSU staff members and dependents have reported incidents in all of the above categories.

The general mood here is that there will be further trouble of some sort. Whether it will occur as result of the discontent that prevailed before the coup and has not been allayed since by the government, or whether it will come as Viet Cong activity is a matter of speculation. It is also a matter of speculation as to just when further trouble will come.

This memorandum has dealt with a series of incidents and has not attempted much in the way of analysis. Perhaps the situation will become clearer; when it does we shall attempt to send a more considered analysis.

Although this memorandum is not very definitive, it is sent as a reminder that in our thinking about MSU's future we cannot ignore the continuing developments in the security situation.

LMW/dw