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VIA CAS SAIGON 2063 FROM AMBASSADOR LODGE DTG 301030Z

TO SECSTATE WASH EYES ONLY FOR RUSK, HARRIMAN, BALL, HILSMAN, HUGHES
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10. WE ANTICIPATE THAT AT THE OUTSET OF THE COUP, UNLESS IT MOVES WITH LIGHTNING SWIFTNESS, THE GVN WILL REQUEST ME OR GEN HARKINS TO USE OUR INFLUENCE TO CALL IT OFF. I BELIEVE OUR RESPONSIBILITIES SHOULD BE THAT OUR INFLUENCE CERTAINLY COULD NOT BE SUPERIOR TO THAT OF THE PRESIDENT WHO IS COMMANDER IN CHIEF AND THAT IF HE IS UNABLE TO CALL IT OFF, WE WOULD CERTAINLY BE UNABLE TO DO SO AND WOULD MERELY BE RISKING AMERICAN LIVES ATTEMPTING TO INTERFERE IN THIS VIETNAMESE PROBLEM. THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT REQUEST AIRCRAFT. HELICOPTERS, FOR THE EVACUATION OF KEY PERSONALITIES THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE STUDIED CLOSELY, BUT WE WOULD CERTAINLY NOT COMMIT OUR PLANES AND PILOTS BETWEEN THE BATTLE LINES OF THE OPPOSING FORCES. WE SHOULD, RATHER, STATE THAT WE WOULD BE WILLING TO ACT IN THIS FASHION DURING A TRUCE IN WHICH BOTH SIDES AGREE TO THE REMOVAL OF KEY PERSONALITIES. I BELIEVE THAT THERE WOULD BE IMMEDIATE POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN ATTEMPTING TO TAKE THESE PERSONALITIES TO ANOTHER NEIGHBORING COUNTRY AND PROBABLY WE WOULD BE BEST SERVED IN DEPOSITING THEM IN SAIPAN WHERE THE ABSENCE OF PRESS, COMMUNICATIONS, ETC, WOULD ALLOW US SOME LEEWAY TO MAKE A FURTHER DECISION AS TO THEIR ULTIMATE DISPOSITION. IF SENIOR VIETNAMESE PERSONALITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES REQUESTED ASYLUM IN

THE EMBASSY OR OTHER AMERICAN INSTALLATIONS, WE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO GRANT IT IN LIGHT OF OUR PREVIOUS ACTION WITH RESPECT TO TRI QUANG. THIS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY PRESENT LATER PROBLEMS BUT HOPEFULLY THE NEW GOVERNMENT MIGHT FEEL DISPOSED TO HELP US SOLVE THIS PROBLEM. NATURALLY ASYLUM WOULD BE GRANTED ON THE SAME BASIS AS THE BUDDHISTS, I.E., PHYSICAL PRESENCE AT THE EMBASSY OR OTHER LOCATION.

11. AS TO REQUESTS FROM THE GENERALS, THEY MAY WELL HAVE NEED OF FUNDS AT THE LAST MOMENT WITH WHICH TO BUY OFF POTENTIAL OPPOSITION. TO THE EXTENT THAT THESE FUNDS CAN BE PASSED DISCREETLY, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD FURNISH THEM. PROVIDED WE ARE CONVINCED THAT THE PROPOSED COUP IS SUFFICIENTLY WELL ORGANIZED TO HAVE A GOOD CHANCE OF SUCCESS. IF THEY ARE SUCCESSFUL, THEY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ASK FOR PROMPT RECOGNITION AND SOME ASSURANCE THAT MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID WILL CONTINUE AT NORMAL LEVEL. WE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO MAKE THESE STATEMENTS IF THE ISSUE IS CLEARCUT PREDICATING OUR POSITION ON THE PRESIDENT'S STATED DESIRE TO CONTINUE THE WAR AGAINST THE VC TO FINAL VICTORY. VOA MIGHT BE AN IMPORTANT MEANS OF DISSEMINATING THIS MESSAGE. SHOULD THE COUP FAIL, WE WILL HAVE TO PICK UP THE PIECES AS BEST WE CAN AT THAT TIME. WE HAVE A COMMITMENT TO THE GENERALS FROM THE AUGUST EPISODE TO ATTEMPT TO HELP IN THE EVACUATION OF THEIR DEPENDENTS. WE SHOULD TRY TO LIVE UP TO THIS IF CONDITIONS WILL PERMIT. AMERICAN COMPLICITY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE CHARGED AND THERE MIGHT BE SOME ACTS TAKEN AGAINST SPECIFIC PERSONALITIES WHICH WE SHOULD ANTICIPATE AND MAKE PROVISION AGAINST AS BEST WE CAN. SHOULD THE COUP PROVE INDECISIVE AND A PROTRACTED STRUGGLE IS IN PROGRESS, WE SHOULD PROBABLY OFFER OUR GOOD OFFICES TO HELP RESOLVE THE ISSUE IN THE INTEREST OF THE WAR AGAINST THE VC. THIS MIGHT HOLD SOME BENEFIT IN TERMS OF CONCESSIONS BY GVN. WE

6. E
WILL NATURALLY INCUR SOME OPPROBRIUM FROM BOTH SIDES IN OUR ROLE AS
MEDIATOR. HOWEVER, THIS OPPROBRIUM WOULD PROBABLY BE LESS
DISTASTEFUL THAN A DEADLOCK WHICH WOULD OPEN THE DOOR TO THE VC.
WE CONSIDER SUCH A DEADLOCK AS THE LEAST LIKELY POSSIBILITY OF
THE THREE.

12. AS REGARDS YOUR PARA 10, I DO NOT KNOW WHAT MORE PROOF
CAN BE OFFERED THAN THE FACT THESE MEN ARE OBVIOUSLY PREPARED TO
RISK THEIR LIVES AND THAT THEY WANT NOTHING FOR THEMSELVES. IF
I AM ANY JUDGE OF HUMAN NATURE, DON'S FACE EXPRESSED OF SINCERITY
AND DETERMINATION ON THE MORNING THAT I SPOKE TO HIM. HEARTILY
AGREE THAT A MISCALCULATION COULD JEOPARDIZE POSITION IN SOUTHEAST
ASIA. WE ALSO RUN TREMENDOUS RISKS BY DOING NOTHING.

IF WE WERE CONVINCED THAT THE COUP WAS GOING TO FAIL,
WE WOULD, OF COURSE DO EVERYTHING WE COULD TO STOP IT.

13. GEN HARKINS HAS READ THIS AND DOES NOT CONCUR.

T O P S E C R E T

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