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MEETING AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT

September 16, 1963, 11:00 AM -- Subject: Vietnam

Present: Secretary Rusk, Secretary McNamara, Secretary Dillon, Director McCone, Under Secretary Ball, Director Bell, Director Murrow, Under Secretary Harriman, General Taylor, General Krulak, Deputy Secretary Gilpatric, Assistant Secretary Hillsman, Assistant Secretary Manning, Mr. Colby (CIA), Mr. Janow (AID), Mr. Bundy, Mr. Forrestal, Mr. Bromley Smith

The telegram from Embassy Saigon, No. 523, had just been received and was read by the group. The remainder of the meeting was given over to listening to and questioning Mr. Huntingdon Sheldon, Deputy Director, Central Intelligence, who had made a special trip to Saigon, and [ ] the Deputy CAS in Saigon. Both of these men had arrived in Washington that morning, flying directly from Saigon.

The import of Mr. Sheldon's report, which was reflected in cables he had sent to Mr. McCone, was that there now exists no capability of overthrowing the Diem government and that building of such a capability would take many months if it were decided to initiate such action now.

Mr. Sheldon speculated on the possibility that Nhu might make a deal with North Vietnam. The hypothesis is stated in the CIA memorandum, attached.

Secretary Rusk was obliged to leave the meeting in order to keep a White House appointment. However, the rest of the group felt the need for a further meeting later in the day, preferably with the President, in an effort to reach agreement on the kind of instructions to be sent to Ambassador Lodge. (A limited meeting with the President was held later in the day.)

Bromley Smith

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