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TO: JEREMY GUNN, GREEN, JIMCC. FROM: JIM GOSLEE/ARRBDate: 12/22/97 09:23:43 AMVSubject: AP Story on  
Vietnam Document Release This MorningCopyright 1997 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.The  
information contained in this news report may not be published, broadcast or otherwise distributed without  
the prior written authority of the Associated Press. By MIKE FEINSILBER Associated Press Writer WASHINGTON  
(AP) -- Seven weeks before President Kennedy was assassinated on Nov. 22, 1963, American military leaders  
were anticipating a withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Vietnam by the end of 1965, newly declassified  
documents suggest. The documents are likely to add to the historical controversy over whether Kennedy  
planned to end American military involvement in Vietnam after the 1964 presidential election. At the time a  
key Oct. 4, 1963 memo was written, the United States had only 16,300 advisers in South Vietnam, a force that  
would swell to more than 536,000 within five years. "All planning will be directed towards preparing RVN  
(Republic of Vietnam) forces for the withdrawal of all U.S. special assistance units and personnel by the end of  
calendar year 1965," said the memo. Signed by Army Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of  
Staff, the memo was directed to the uniformed leaders of the four military services. The memo also ordered  
the service chiefs to "execute the plan to withdraw 1,000 U.S. military personnel by the end of 1963." In all,  
800 pages of Joint Chiefs papers were made public today by the government's Assassination Records Review  
Board. The board was created by Congress to amass for public inspection any records that might shed light on  
Kennedy's murder. Some historians believe that Kennedy intended to get out of Vietnam and that his  
successor, Lyndon Johnson -- eager not to be seen as the first American president to lose a war -- reversed  
Kennedy's strategy. But historian Ronald Spector of George Washington University said the execution of South  
Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem on Nov. 1, 1963 may have been more decisive in keeping the United  
States in Vietnam than the change at the top of the U.S. government. American leaders discovered that Diem  
had been bottling up reports from the field that showed the war was going badly for the South Vietnamese,  
said Spector, who teaches a course on the U.S. role in Indochina. The documents show that less than a month  
after Kennedy's assassination, Johnson told his commanders to press the South Vietnamese toward "increased  
activity" against North Vietnam while considering "the plausibility of denial; possible North Vietnamese  
retaliation; (and) other international reaction." America would remain in Vietnam until August 1973, when  
U.S. military action in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos ended. By the end of that year, the United States had only  
50 military people in Vietnam and had suffered 46,163 battle deaths. The war ended April 30, 1975 with North  
Vietnam's capture of Saigon, the South Vietnamese capital.  
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