JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM
IDENTIFICATION FORM

AGENCY INFORMATION

AGENCY: SSCIA
RECORD NUMBER: 157-10014-10094
RECORDS SERIES: HEARINGS
AGENCY FILE NUMBER: 13-H-03

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

ORIGINATOR: SSCIA
FROM: CONEIN, LUCIEN
TO:
TITLE: R-379
DATE: 06/20/75
PAGES: 87
SUBJECTS: CONEIN, LUCIEN

VIETNAM

DIEM, NGO DINH

DOCUMENT TYPE: TRANSCRIPT
CLASSIFICATION: TOP SECRET
RESTRICTIONS: 1A, 1B, REFERRED
CURRENT STATUS: POSTPONED IN FULL
DATE OF LAST REVIEW: 07/22/98
OPENING CRITERIA:
COMMENTs: Box 4

Released under the John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 (44 USC 2107 Note).
Case#: NW 53244 Date: 06-14-2017
The United States Senate

Report of Proceedings

Hearing held before

Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities

Friday, June 20, 1975

Washington, D.C.

(Stenotype Tape and Notes turned over to the Committee for destruction)

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TESTIMONY OF
Lucien Conein

EXHIBITS
FOR IDENTIFICATION

Conein No. 1

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EXECUTIVE SESSION

Friday, June 20, 1975

United States Senate,
Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Governmental Activities,
Washington, D. C.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:15 o'clock p.m., in Room S-407, the Capitol, Senator John Tower presiding.
Present: Senators Hart of Michigan, Huddleston, Mondale, Morgan, Tower (presiding), Mathias, Baker and Schweiker.
Also present: William Miller, Staff Director; Frederick A. O. Schwarz, Jr., Chief Counsel; Curtis R. Smothers, Minority Counsel; and Frederick Baron, Charles Kirkbow, Burton Wides, Michael J. Madigan, William Bader, David Aaron and Patrick Shea, Professional Staff Members.
TOP SECRET

PROCEDINGS

(2:15 p.m.)

Senator Tower. The Committee will come to order.

Before we proceed to hear the witness, I think we should have a report from the team that went down to the White House this morning to examine some documents, and I believe they will report to us and have a recommendation on how the Committee should agree to handle this material, and shall I call on --

Senator Mondale. Howard has the notes.

Senator Tower. I call on Senator Baker.

Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, Bill Bader has the notes.

Senator Mondale. Well then, call on me. I can read them.

Senator Tower. Mr. Bader?

Mr. Bader. Thank you, Senator.

The documents that we reviewed briefly at the White House situation room were four different categories.

In the first category, there were copies of the so-called Mongoose files. These files contain minutes of the Special Group Augmented and copies of the rest of the Mongoose files, arranged in chronological order. And these holdings are from the files of the Executive Secretary of the 40 Committee and include the files of the Chairman and the Executive Secretary of the Special Group Augmented.

Also these trust files are turned over to the Chairman by General Lansdale after the group ceased functioning, that is,
the Mongoose group. As I looked at them, there were about a hundred documents in this first group.

The second group of documents are CIA's Mongoose files, which we have already seen. There are some six files, and I assume these are the same files, and we have seen them. But of course, we didn't have a chance to go through them with any care.

The third group of files were the Rockefeller Commission papers and files on assassination, and that includes the summary of facts, the investigation of plans for the assassination of Castro and perhaps more than Castro, the other assassinations, Trujillo as well.

Mr. Madigan. Lumumba's in there and also a reference to Sukarno.

Mr. Baker. That is a some 80 or 90 page document, which, as I say, is a summary of facts, and this was prepared by David Babine.

Senator Baker. It might be important to note here, Mr. Chairman, that the White House indicated to us that that summary was not a Rockefeller Commission document and did not necessarily represent the position of the Rockefeller Commission as such.

That is the way I interpret their language.

I get the impression that this may have been a summary that was not accepted for conclusion in the report, therefore there may be some conflict.
Senator Morgan. It was prepared by whom?

Senator Baker. Belin, the Executive Director.

Mr. Bader. The last category, the fourth category, are some Special Group minutes, that is, a file, it is a tiny file, really, of assassinations and allegations, and these minutes were culled from Special Group meetings and they are highly selective in the sense that they are documents as they could find them in their search that related only to Cuba and it is clear that there is a great deal more to come in this category of the Special Group minutes. It was just on Cuba. There was nothing on the other assassinations.

Senator Schweiker. You mean more that you have not seen yet?

Mr. Bader. More that they have not put together as yet, or at least they have not made available to us, and those were the four categories.

It is a little hard to judge just how much work it will take to go through them. It is, I would say, somewhere around 400 to 500 pages, perhaps.

Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, I would ask Fritz and Bill to monitor what I'm about to say next to make sure that I reflect it accurately.

There is a general uneasiness at the White House about letting us have these documents unrestricted, although pretty clearly they are committed to let us have them, under some
circumstance.

It is also clear to me that some documents have not yet been located and supplied to us and that parts of some documents have been deleted. I think we probably can get that deleted information before very long.

The suggestion was made that we ask the White House to bring those documents up here by their own personnel on Monday so that we could use them to examine witnesses. If they care to keep someone here to retain technical possession of the documents, to take them back with them at the close of that day or any day on which we use them, they might do that, and that sooner or later we would have to find a way to utilize those documents, meaning to put certain documents in the record or to read them into the record or to supply copies.

Rod Hill seemed to think well of that idea. I told him that I would suggest it to Senator Tower and to the rest of the Committee, and hopefully Senator Tower or Senator Church would be back in touch with the White House to see if we can negotiate an agreement along those lines. I think we can. I think the White House will agree to that arrangement.

Senator Mondale. There are two points I would like to make.

Senator Tower. Fritz?

Senator Mondale. I think Hills was saying, from some of the documentation we looked at it was clear that we may not yet
have all of the documents that we ought to look at, and I think they are looking for more documents. Things we read referred to things that were not there. So I don't think we can be satisfied yet that the full record is available for perusal.

The second thing is, in our quick look it is very apparent that we must have the documentation. I saw some which would have been very important in our questioning McCon, which may have helped him remember things. It was very central to it.

I think we wasted a couple of hours when it could have been done very quickly with one or two documents.

I saw, there were several other documents that immediately struck me as being essential to our work. I don't think we saw anything that was revolutionary or that filled in a lot of the central gaps.

Senator Tower. You didn't see anything that was sensitive to the extent that it might reflect on a foreign government, or something like that?

Senator Mondale. There might be stuff in there. Honestly, I don't know. But just looking at our work --

Senator Tower. What you're saying, Fritz, is you don't think we need all of it, that we could select out some of it. Is that it?

Senator Mondale. What I am saying is I think there is more available somewhere than we saw, and they said they are still looking. Hills said he wasn't satisfied that it was all
there yet, and secondly, we've got to have it.

    Senator Tower. Right.

    Senator Mondale. And we need it for cross-examination and
we need it --

    Senator Tower. Well, the question is, do you need every-
thing that you looked at today, or do you think --

    Senator Mondale. I don't know. Some of the stuff we
already have.

    Mr. Bader. Some, we already have.

    Senator Mondale. So we don't need that.

    Senator Tower. Yes.

    Senator Mondale. The other material, it struck me that
I don't see what we have to lose by having most of it. I think
most of it is historical.

    Senator Baker. I think we ought to have all of it, John.

    The essence of the suggestion I tried to make was that we have
physically present in this room all of it, and then we can decide
how we use it and what parts of it.

    Senator Huddleston. One question on the documents.

    Is that just the material that the Rockefeller Commission
has had?

    Senator Baker. No, the Rockefeller Commission apparently
has not had these NSC minutes.

    Senator Mondale. They did not have the NSC minutes.

    Mr. Schwarz. They asked for them and we were told about
ten days ago that the White House refused to give it to the
Rockefeller Commission for some reason.

Senator Baker. That's right.

Senator Mondale. The interesting thing, among other things,
it tells you exactly who was at all of these meetings.

Senator Baker. That's remarkable, there's no doubt about
who was there and in most cases who said what.

Senator Mondale. The heat was on, there's no doubt about
that.


Is it the sense of the Committee that we should adopt that
procedure for now, at least, for -- let's say, what is it,
Monday that we want them up here?

Mr. Schwarz. Bundy is coming at 2:00 o'clock on Monday
and we've set an opportunity to meet with him and go over and
refresh his recollection and so forth. Are we entitled to have
them for that purpose as well as the actual use of them at the
hearing?

Senator Baker. My understanding is that there is to be no
restriction on our use of them.

Senator Mondale. We not only need them, but we need them
in a way that they're useful to us on cross-examination. Now, as
I understand it, the staff will be down there this afternoon or!
maybe into tomorrow and the next day, for that matter.

Senator Tower. So the staff can sift through some of this?
Mr. Schwarz. And digest it, and so forth.

Senator Mondale. And we should ask that the materials
that are appropriate or relevant to the next witness be available to us and that staff have them organized in order to help us.

Senator Baker. There is a point there I'd like to vary on a little.

I don't want to give the White House an opportunity to pick out of that stuff what they're going to send up here. I would like our request to be to send all of it, and then for us to decide here, with the White House concurrence, on how we use it. that is, do we read it into the record, do we photocopy it, or do they supply us a copy of it.

Let us make the essence of it that they send it here.

Senator Tower. The proposition by Senator Baker is that we ask them to bring the documents here, allow the bearer to be present while the documents are being used, so they maintain technical possession and take them back to the White House after we have used them in our session or subsequent sessions.

Then we can determine at a later time what final disposition we make.

Is that correct, Howard?

Senator Baker. That's correct.

Senator Tower. I was not able to get Senator Church. He is off in the wilds of Idaho.
Mr. Schwarz. I talked with him last night, and this is quite consistent with our conversation.

Senator Tower. I think this will be agreeable with him, but I told his secretary that if, for any reason, after he gets in touch with his office he does find it objectionable that I would reopen the matter in a subsequent meeting.

Senator Mondale. Just one question.

There would not be a White House staff person here during someone's testimony?

Mr. Schwarz. They'd sit outside the door.

Senator Mondale. I don't think he should be here as a monitor.

Senator Baker. I think that's a point we'll have to make clear. I agree with you, Fritz, he ought to be physically present, like guarding the door that we don't run off with it, but not here.

Senator Tower. And we would undertake that we're not going to xerox them or anything while he's sitting out there. Is that agreed on by everybody? Is there any objection to that?

Then that is the way we will proceed.

Senator Baker. Mike Madijan makes a point that's well taken. It was Mike's understanding that Hill's was telling us there were certain other documents that he had already identified but had not yet reviewed and we ought to make sure that we get
all of those as well.

Senator Tower. I think the problem down there is they do not have enough staff to get all of this stuff together, is that it?

Senator Baker. I think the problem is they do not want to be taken by surprise.

Senator Huddleston. They want to see it all first.

Senator Tower. They want to see it before it comes to us?

Senator Baker. I don't blame them.

Senator Tower. I understand Mr. Kissinger has some interest in seeing them.

Senator Mondale. I think that's why they don't have enough staff.

Senator Tower. Okay.

Is there anything else of a housekeeping nature to come up?

Senator Baker. I might say to the Committee, Mr. Chairman, that you conducted a most intriguing interview with Mr. Angleton yesterday.

Senator Tower. We did. In effect, we took a deposition from him in my office yesterday, and I think it was very illuminating, to say the least.

Senator Morgan. He looks the part.

Senator Baker. He sure does.

Senator Tower. So I would suggest to the Committee
the reading of that deposition. I think it would be worth your time.

Senator Baker and Senator Mathias were there also.

All right.

Mr. Kirbow?

Mr. Kirbow. Mr. Chairman, I think it would be helpful to the members if they know that when Mr. Conein is testifying that he has before him what he refers to as an afteraction report, in which both he and the Station Chief before Mr. Richardson, John Richardson, compiled immediately after the coup took place in Saigon.

He is going to limit his testimony principally, since he has no personal knowledge of the Washington scene, to painting for the Committee, if you will, a picture of the events that transpired from early May of 1963 on through the time of the coup, and he will then be prepared to answer any questions, much as we did with Mr. Colby this morning.

Senator Tower. He wants to proceed in narrative form?

Mr. Kirbow. Yes.

Senator Tower. All right, we will proceed with Mr. Conein.

(Whereupon, at 2:27 o'clock p.m., the witness entered the hearing room.)
TOP SECRET

Senator Tower. Mr. Conein, thank you for coming today.

We will be questioning you under oath today, so if you would
raise your right hand, do you solemnly swear that the testimony
you are about to give before this Committee is the truth, the
whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. Conein. I do, sir.

Senator Tower. Counsel will advise you on your rights.

Mr. Kirbow. Please be seated.

Mr. Schwarz. Mr. Conein, just a couple of procedural
matters.

You are aware that you have the right to counsel?

Mr. Conein. Right.

Mr. Schwarz. And if at any time you want to stop and
obtain counsel in the middle of these proceedings you have
that right as well?

Mr. Conein. Yes.

Mr. Schwarz. And of course you have all your constitutional
rights including your rights under the Fifth Amendment, you
understand that?

Mr. Kirbow will question you.

Senator Tower. Mr. Kirbow?
TESTIMONY OF LUCIEN E. CONEIN

Mr. Kirbow, Mr. Conein, for the record would you please state your full name, your current address, and present occupation?

Mr. Conein. My name is Lucien E. Conein, Co-n-e-i-n.

I live at 1111 Ingleside -- I-n-g-l-e-s-i-d-e -- Avenue, McLean, Virginia.

I am employed by the Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration.

Mr. Kirbow. Thank you.

Mr. Conein, would you be good enough to give the Committee a brief synopsis of your background from the time you first became engaged in any government work, either military or civilian?

Mr. Conein. I enlisted in the Army in 1941, September of 1941, and in 1943 I graduated from OCS in Fort Benning, Georgia.

At that time, I had been asked to volunteer for the Office of Strategic Services, which I did, and was sent to England for further training in the Special Operations Executive, which was an organization affiliated with the OSS under British Command.

I was parachuted behind the lines in France in 1944. In December, 1944 I returned to the United States and I was sent for training preparatory to going to the China, Burma, India theatre which I did in 1945.

In March of 1945, the French garrison in French Indochina
had been attacked by the Japanese and I was asked to parachute into the area to recuperate elements of the French forces, to consolidate them, retrain them, go back into Indochina and to form a base for operations in the northern part of Indochina.

This I did and later on I was in Hanoi with the Viet Minh took over in 1945, and I stayed until 1946 when I came back to the United States and then I was sent to the SSU mission, which was the predecessor of the CIA, to Germany and I served in the SSU, the CIG and the CIA.

I left Germany in 1953, still in the military, where I became a desk chief at CIA, and in 1954 I was asked by Mr. Helms if I would go back to Vietnam, which I did, under the command of then-Colonel Edward G. Lansdale and I was assigned to North Vietnam.

I stayed there until the Viet Minh took over in October of 1954. I then went to Haiphong, and in 1955 I came to Saigon and at that time, the operation was to establish a viable government in Vietnam, the government of Ngo Dinh Diem.

I remained until 1956 and in 1956 I asked to be relieved from the CIA so I could return to the military service. I had been up to that time, approximately 13 years as a military man with OSS, SSU, CIG and CIA.

I left and I joined the Special Forces in the Army and I served from '56 to '59. In 1959 I was assigned to the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence of the U.S. Army and was sent to
I retired from the military in 1961 and returned to the CIA. I was sent to Vietnam in 1961 and I remained in Vietnam until August of 1967. I left the CIA in 1968, July the 15th, retired from the CIA and military. I went in private business for a couple of years and in 1971 I worked as a consultant for the White House for approximately four months, four or five months.

I then was a consultant to the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs of the Department of Justice and I joined the DEA in 1973 and I am presently working for the DEA.

Mr. Kirbow. Directing your attention then to that period after you returned to Vietnam after 1961 to the period beginning in early 1963, would you relate to the Committee your experiences in connection with the build-up and the eventual General's coup and the downfall of the Diem government?

Mr. Conclin. Yes, sir.

In February of 1962, two Air Force pilots, Vietnamese Air Force pilots, attacked the Presidential Palace of Ngo Dinh Diem. This was not the first indication that there was something wrong, because if you will recall in November of 1960 there was another attempted coup.

At that time, in February, I was asked if I would go to the different military leaders which I knew and had known in the past to find out what was the political pressure, what was the
16
temperature, was there really some disidence within the military
ranks, was there really a basis for an uprising against Ngo Dien
Diem.

4
I was unable at that time to determine this fact. There
was isolated disidence within the military structure. This was
reported in February or March in 1962.

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In the meantime, Mr. Colby had assigned me to work with the
Minister of the Interior of the Government of Vietnam, and I
was responsible to be the liaison between the CIA and the
Ministry of the Interior on a program, on a project, which was
called Strategic Hamlet Program.

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This was an idea forwarded by Ngo Dien Nhu, the President's
brother and counsellor, to establish security within the
hamlets and the villages where people lived so that they could
deny access of food, taxes and what have you to the Vietcong.

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In this position I was able to travel quite extensively
because I was under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior
and indirectly I worked for the President's brother who was in
charge of the program and by travelling I was able to go to
every province, I was able to talk to unit commanders down to
and including small sections. Some of these people I had known
for many years: some of them I had known back even in World War
II. Some of them were in powerful positions, and I was able to
talk to them on a person to person basis, not as a government
official.
I did wear a uniform though I was out of the Army when I was in that position because those military commanders who knew me always assumed that I was in the Army and that I was still in the Army. Therefore, it was much easier for me to travel in uniform and special arrangements were made for me to carry an identification card as being an active duty military officer. This was done with the permission of General Harkins, and it was also known to General Westmoreland when General Westmoreland took over.

In that period, I would say that the country team was attempting to get organized so they could show that they were speaking with one head under Ambassador Nolting, and we had a committee which the military and also UN agencies, including the CIA, were members, and it was called the Truehart Committee where we jointly made plans to help out the government of Vietnam in different programs, whether they be military programs or USAID type programs, self-help programs, also programs of which to arm the villagers so they could protect themselves.

We didn't arm them with modern weapons, we gave them shotguns, .12 gauge shotguns. There were very few modern weapons available for that type of activity.

At the same time, we were interested in the Montagnard Program and I did work with the Montagnards -- those are the hill tribes in central Vietnam.

We did arm certain elements of the Montagnards, and we di
keep them up and organize them in paramilitary forces, and these forces were eventually turned over completely to the U.S. Army.

About -- well, I can say definitely on 7 of May, 1963, the Minister of Interior, myself and his entourage flew to Hue in central Vietnam. While in Hue, it was on my aircraft that I had assigned to me for that day -- while in Hue, they had a very large meeting of different military authorities and at that time I did not realize what was going on.

They had met with the President's brother, Ngo Dinh Can, who was considered the war lord, in a way, and some decisions were made, of which I was not aware of. We returned quite late the night of the 7th; though I wanted to stay, the Ministry of the Interior told me it would be impossible. I wanted to see the celebration of the birthday of Buddha. I wanted to see the boats with the candles lit going down the perfumed river, but it was not to be.

The next day there was an attack by the military forces on the Buddhists. Up to that time, the Buddhists, as an entity, was not a political force and never thought of being, and when the attack on the Buddhists came about, this was, in my estimation, one of the turning points in what was happening in Vietnam.

It could have been salvaged, but this -- again, I had talked later with the Minister of the Interior and I had talked with Ngo Dinh Nhu on several occasions when they were trying to
appraise the situation. They were trying to meet some demands of the Buddhist leaders. This, unfortunately, did not come about.

I did not travel too much during the latter part of May or June, and it was quite evident at that time, to me and to other people who were there that there was a strong anti-American feeling, and also a restriction put on by the government of Vietnam about people associating with Americans. The only time that it broke down was on the 4th of July of 1963 when the Ambassador Nolting threw a party for the Independence Day and it seemed like every military leader and political personality was attending American parties that day.

I received a message to meet with General Don, who was Commander of I CORPS at that time, and it was in a public place, it was in the Caravelle Hotel downstairs where they had sort of a big dining room, a nightclub, and I was present with General Don and his entourage and everybody from the Diem government was in the same place. The place was jam packed.

It was at that time on the 4th of July that I had the first indication that something serious was being contemplated when General Don told me that if the Buddhist situation does not get settled that the military are planning. I reported this fact, and I believe it was around the 9th or 9th of July, that more indications -- on the 11th of July, Ngo Diem Nhu called the Generals together for a staff meeting at the General
Staff Headquarters and shocked them by telling them that he
knew of some coup planning going on by the Generals.

This scared the Generals and other officers, needless to
say, that Ngo Dien Nhu would be completely aware that there
was some dissidence in the ranks.

Nothing happened much before the 20th or 21st of August
of 1963. At that time -- I have to go back a little bit.

We had had bonzes burning themselves, and we had had local
press releases made by Madam Nhu that sometimes were not too
well received by the Americans and also antagonized the
population.

On the night of the 21st of August, General Ton That Dinh,
as Military Governor of Saigon and Commander of the 3rd Corps,
had established a curfew. If I recall correctly, the curfew
was to start about 7:00 or 9:00 o'clock at night. Anybody
seen after that time would be seen -- after that would be shot.

And that night, elements -- later on, we didn't know at that
time, later on proving to be elements of the Special Forces,
which was the praetorian guard of Ngo Dien Nhu and the police
dressed in military uniforms attacked the pagodas in Saigon.

Now what was very bad about this, Ambassador Nolting had
already been relieved and Ambassador Lodge was on his way to
take over. And Ambassador Lodge arrived on the 22nd or 23rd
of August. I am not sure exactly of the date.

And he found that Saigon was an armed camp.
Now, during this period of these attacks on the pagodas, there had been many contacts made by a lot of people to anybody who would listen to them talking about doing something about doing away with the existing regime. I had talked with the different generals and on the one time in August -- I don't recall if it was the 23rd or 24th -- we received a cable which has later been known as the famous Roger Hillsman cable, which practically gave us the go ahead that this type of thing could not continue.

Talking of that type of thing, we're talking about the present regime continuing as it was.

There was a lot of talk of coups. We had met with Generals on different occasions. I had met with them, other people had also. We had met with Colonels and junior officers. And we anticipated that there would be some type of action taken in the latter part of August.

If you will recall, or those of you who don't know, it aborted at that time. It aborted because, one, they did not have necessary forces. I am talking about the coup plotters, did not have the necessary forces to combat those loyal to the Diem government, namely elements of the Marines, elements of the Rangers, the Presidential Guard, and other units, and especially the Special Forces, which were the best-armed troops available.

Also, they announced in the press that the CIA was paying...
off or was paying to have a coup. This was a very shrewd and
calculating move on any man on the quality of Ngo Dien Nhu
who was a shrewd politician and also a master of psychological
warfare.

During the month of September, there was still more talk
of coups and at that time, the month of September, I had been
told by Ambassador Lodge that I was to monitor coup planning
only. I was not told to -- that I was to convey any messages.

I had conveyed messages to Big Minh on two occasions, General
Khiem -- K-h-i-e-m -- on one occasion. I had met General
Khiem and Big Minh on another occasion.

On several occasions I had met General Don and other
military leaders.

In September, the latter part of September, there had been
some reassessment of what had been going on.

I will say this, that I worked for Ambassador Lodge. I
reported to Ambassador Lodge and I received my instructions
from Ambassador Lodge. If they were cabled instructions, he had
a very good habit of not reading something. He would fold a
piece of paper and what pertained to you for instructions he
would let you read that, and that alone so that you didn't
know who was sending it or where it came from. He just read
that, and he said those are the instructions, do you understand
them? Yes, sir: all right, go carry them out.

In October -- I'm running over these things in a hurry --
in October, the first part of October, I think October the
34th or 4th, I was asked to contact Big Minh. I was by myself
and I contacted Big Minh at his headquarters.
At that time, Big Minh explained to me that they had had,
that there was going to be a coup d'etat, that they didn't want
this to be an American sponsored coup d'etat, they wanted to be
assured of American backing, specifically in the part where it
comes to military and economic aid after the coup had been
successful.
Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, could I interrupt for just
a second?
Senator Baker. It's a terribly fine point, and I don't
mean to be critical, but could you elaborate a little bit on
what you understood him to mean when he said he did not want
it to be an American-sponsored coup d'etat, but he wanted
assurances in advance of American economic and military support
after a successful coup d'etat.
Could you tell me how you make that distinction a little
clearer?
Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.
I had specific instructions from the Ambassador, and all
the instructions I received, Senator, before any meeting, I
was told exactly what I would say, and if I recall at that
time, I was told to go ahead to the meeting, and I have it here.
in the paper -- and I hate to rifle through paper, but I could
answer it if I could just --

Now, what the General meant, he did not want actual U.S.
participation in the coup d'état. He did not want the U.S.
government to start the coup d'état. He also outlined three
general ideas, this was the first time that a leader had
mentioned the possibility of assassination. This assassination
was not of Diem. This was -- if they could not do anything, it
would be the elimination of Ngo Dic Can who was the war lord
in central Vietnam and Ngo Dic Nhu.

At that time, General Minh did say that one of the alter-
native means was to eliminate Can and Nhu and keep Diem. That
was one of the alternatives.

Senator Baker. Did they ask you for any support in
eliminating either of these people?

Mr. Conein. No, sir. I had never, and even right up
to the very end, I had never been asked for any resources
whatsoever to help or to aid in the elimination of any individual.

Senator Tower. This was developed in some considerable
detail by Mr. Colby this morning and you might be interested
in reading the transcript.

Mr. Kirbow. I think, having interrupted you, appropriately.

Mr. Conein, could I ask you too, you have placed, or penned
a paper, made a chronology of all of the events immediately
preceding and after the coup d'état.
Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Mr. Kirbow. Do you have a copy of that there before you?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Mr. Kirbow. And you have looked at the original, which I hold here?

Mr. Conein. Yes, I have it here.

Mr. Kirbow. This has been marked, Mr. Chairman, as Conein Exhibit No. 1 and I ask at this time that the entire document, as best evidence of what transpired at the time, be placed in the record for future use by the Committee.

Senator Tower. Without objection.

(The document referred to was marked as Conein Exhibit No. 1 for identification.)
Mr. Kirbow. Please go ahead, Mr. Conein, with your summary.

Mr. Conein. To answer your question on this, I have the document. This is my after action report that I wrote after the coup d'état.

In this, it says: "Diem Minh did not expect U.S. government support for himself or his colleagues for a coup d'état but did need U.S. government assurances that U.S. government would not attempt to thwart his plans. Minh stated the need for continuation of American military and economic aid at the present level.

"Minh outlined three plans under consideration by the Generals: to assassinate Ngo Dien Whu and Ngo Dien Can and to keep President Diem in office. Two, have the military units go into dissidence against the government of Vietnam, encircle and isolate Saigon. Three, direct military action against the military units in Saigon."

Mr. Kirbow. Thank you.

Would you go ahead with your summary, please?

Mr. Conein. Under instructions of the Ambassador, I accelerated my contacts in monitoring Hue and reported back all times exactly what the conversations were. Sometimes I had as many as two or three meetings. Primarily my meetings were with General Don, who was the organizer in his position of getting the commanders of different military units committed
to the coup.

You must understand also, gentlemen, that there were not one coup plan. There were several. The problem that was facing the people who were making assessments of this was which one had the most likely chance of succeeding? We were at the point of no return. There was no chance of pulling back, because there was going to be a coup. The best thing to do was to monitor and keep the U.S. government advised of who the principal players were and what their intentions were then and in the future.

It was an impossible situation, and also during this time when it was getting down to the critical element in October, they had to have assurances, the Generals had to have assurances, that I was speaking for the Ambassador. Several attempts were made to get these assurances, and it was practically impossible because of security around the Generals, who were already suspect, it was almost impossible for anybody to approach them at a reception, although they had intended to do this.

So it was arranged that the Ambassador did give the proper assurances that I was speaking for him and that I was acting upon his orders.

Mr. Kirbow. Now that was done about the 17th of October?

Mr. Conein. The 17th, 20th -- it was in the middle of October it was assured that I was speaking for them, for the Ambassador, and that I was carrying out his instructions.
Mr. Kirbow. Could I call your attention to an entry in
that document that we discussed of 12 October where you
on page 5 and ask you to elaborate for the Committee about
this reference to Secretary McNamara?

Mr. Counsel. Yes.

Here it says that: "Captain Nguyen Quang Nguyen, Chief
of Operations, Armor Command, stated he was contacted by two
different coup groups during the week of 5-12 October: the second
coup group was headed by Lt. Colonel Pham Ngo Thao" —
Pham Ngo Thao was an officer, extremely capable, extremely
brilliant. Unfortunately, he was killed later, about a year
and a half after the coup. He was working with the Chief of
the Secret Police, Dr. Tran Khim Tuyen, T-u-y-e-n. Dr.
Tuyen was the head of the President Diem's Secret Police, the
civilian part of the Secret Police, and had been so since
1955, but right at the time of the coup d'etat, Ngo Diem Nhu
became highly suspicious of him and had appointed him as
Consul General in Cairo and therefore Dr. Tuyen's group, it
was also an important group, was left over to Colonel Tau,
and Colonel Tau was trying to hold together a group of dissident
individuals who were also making their plans based upon the
direction of Dr. Tuyen who unfortunately never got to Cairo,
but he did get as far as Hong Kong and stayed there.

So there were different elements contacting the same
group.
It was absolutely necessary in the coup that the Armor was
in. It was necessary that the Airborne was in. It was
necessary that the proper military units, it was also necessary
that the Air Force was in.

Now, the opposition forces were the Praetorian Guards,
the Special Forces, and the Palace Guards, very well-equipped
and extremely well-armed and they were in Saigon. This
was the danger, because to make a confrontation directly in
that city would have blown the hell out of the city the way
these people shoot, I'm sorry to say. You have to have a truck
of ammunition for each rifle that they shoot.

Mr. Kirbow. During this period of October or about that
time, were you aware of the requests that were being made on
the Ambassador and the Chief of Station to attempt to obtain
detailed plans of the coup from --

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Mr. Kirbow. Were you instructed to take care of that?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

The request that had been made -- I assumed, I learned
later on, I learned later on that they were being made by
Washington, I learned that they were made by Washington --
was to have complete detail of the military plan, the political
plan and their ideas for the future.

When I was talking at meetings -- now, I didn't go to
meetings like here, gentlemen; I had to sneak around and meet

---
in a dentist's office and even had to have some work done on
my teeth so that they could see that I had reason -- I mean,
that's an example. I had to sneak around, as I had a very high
profile in Vietnam, sort of cover my tracks of why I was meeting
and talking to these different individuals.

And I was told to try to procure these plans. I was
promised these plans, and they had a coup committee, and I
learned afterwards, I didn't know it at the time, that there
was already dissidence within the coup group, the people who
were going to pull the coup, and one General didn't like the
other General. The best way I can describe it, if you had
three Vietnamese Generals sitting and talking to you, one
General would walk out of the room to go to the john, two of
them would tell you, don't trust that one and finally the one
who would outwait the other two and there would be one left,
and he would say, don't trust those two. So it was a very
difficult situation, gentlemen. It was not one of these things
that you think just ran along very smoothly.

It looks good in a report, but the frustrations of trying
to get the man to give you the things that he had promised
you, to try to deal with different personalities through one
man or two men, to get, was practically impossible.

In the latter part of October, as I say, I think that the
people back here in Washington figured out that I was being
set up for a patsy and there was a possibility that it would be
highly embarrassing for the United States government in case
that it was found out that I had been set up as a patsy. They
made a recommendation that somebody more senior to me and with
extensive military backgrounds should take over from me.
Senator Baker. Well, Mr. Chairman, why -- maybe this was
covered earlier -- but why did you say you were being set
up?
Mr. Conein. No, somebody back here.
Senator Schweiker. Why?
Mr. Conein. Why? Because they couldn't understand why
I was getting all of the information. Obviously, if I'm getting
this information of when we're going to plan and what is going
to happen, what units are going to be, obviously somebody is
setting me up for a patsy and would blame the United States
government.
Senator Baker. Who made that determination?
Mr. Conein. The people back here thought I was being set
up for a patsy, so they sent a message to the Ambassador and
recommended that a very capable officer and a personal friend
of mine, General Dick Stillwell, would take over instead of
me. But when this was brought up to General Don and the coup
ter members, they said, no, we trust Conein, we don't want anybody
else. So I continued.
There was a plan to transfer me at the last moment. I wish
they had. I wouldn't be here today, there would be somebody
Senator Baker. I have a cable to Saigon from McGeorge Bundy to Lodge, I guess it is 24 October. It says: "Eyes only to Lodge and Harkins from Bundy. There may be danger. Nhu attempting entrapment through Don's approaches to Conein. Feel quite strongly that Lodge and Harkins can stand back from any nonessential involvement. It seems wise to maintain close control over meetings between Don and Conein."

Is that the message that activated the disengagement?
Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Schweiker. Was the other telegram we heard this morning related to this at all, or was that a different time sequence, whereby we were warned that we wanted to have nothing to do with anything that smacked of assassination?
Mr. Schwarz. That is right in the same time period.

Senator Schweiker. Was that part of the patsy concern?
Mr. Conein. Oh, you're talking about that, on the 5th of October, sir, or on the 4th. There is one thing that you misunderstand. There might be a twenty-four hour difference because we cross the international dateline, so I might say the 3rd and it would be the 4th.

Senator Schweiker. How does that wire fit into what we are talking about?
Mr. Conein. All right, on the 5th of October meeting between myself and General Big Minh, Duong Van Minh, at his headquarters, at this point, Minh stated, and I read this over.
and outlined three plans under consideration by the Generals to assassinate Ngo Dinh Nhu and Ngo Dinh Can and to keep President Diem in office.

When I reported this to the Ambassador, we had at that time an Acting Chief of Station by the name of [handwritten note: David Smith]. He, on his own, talked to the Ambassador and made a reference that we should not -- I didn't know this, but that we should not eliminate the possibility of the assassination of Ngo Dinh Can and Ngo Dinh Nhu, that this might preclude bloodshed in Saigon.

He was, if I recall properly, quite severely reprimanded by then-Director John McCone.

Senator Schweiker. Well, McCone wired -- Senator Tower. That is what triggered the Colby wire back there, or McCone, which Colby actually sent.

Mr. Schwarz. Are you testifying now from your review of the documents, or from what you knew at the time?

Mr. Conein. I am testifying from a review of my after action report.

Mr. Schwarz. But your after action report does not mention the McCone cable.

Mr. Conein. No. In my after action report there were a lot of things left out. It would have to be a book, sir.

Mr. Schwarz. At the time, did you know of the McCone cable?

Mr. Conein. I did not know, sir.
Mr. Schwarz. The substance of it was not transmitted to you either?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Mr. Schwarz. So to make that perfectly clear on the record --

Senator Schweiker. The substance of it was not?

Mr. Conein. The substance of my stating the options, that I knew.

Mr. Schwarz. You knew that had been communicated to us?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Schweiker. But you did not know what option had been eliminated?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Mr. Schwarz. You were not told?

Senator Schweiker. And yet you were the key guy in the coup?

Mr. Conein. I was not told at that point. I was told later on about assassinations. I can't recall if it was around the 20th of October or when.

Mr. Schwarz. You were told by whom?

Senator Schweiker. What by whom?

Mr. Conein. By Ambassador Lodge that we would not tolerate or would not condone any assassination.

Senator Schweiker. Was that within the same timeframe?

Mr. Conein. That was within a two-week timeframe, yes, sir.
Senator Schweiker. And they were your instructions then?

Mr. Conein. They were my instructions then, sir.

Mr. Schwarz. How did he convey that to you? Did he do it
by showing you a cable, or orally, or what fashion?

Mr. Conein. No, he told this to me on a subsequent meeting
that I had with the Generals, sir.

Mr. Schwarz. Did he instruct you to tell the Generals
that the United States opposed assassination?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Schweiker. And did you?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Schweiker. And what was their reaction to that?

Mr. Conein. The reaction was just, okay.

We're not talking now about a businesslike way of doing
things. All right, you don't want it like that? Well, we'll
do it our own way anyway. They didn't say that, you know.

Senator Schweiker. That's what you got?

Mr. Conein. They conveyed it, all right, you don't like it,
we won't talk about it anymore.

Mr. Schwarz. Does your after action report say that you
passed that message on to Big Minh?

Mr. Conein. I don't recall -- no, it doesn't. I think
that -- all right, the report -- I did not pass it to Big Minh.
I passed it to Don.

Mr. Schwarz. Does your after action report say that?
Mr. Conein. No, it does not.

Mr. Schwarz. Does your action report describe the meeting which you had with Don in which you say that you did pass it to him?

Mr. Conein. It describes a meeting which I had with Don which I believe was on the 24th in which this was brought up. It was in the airport at 8:00 o'clock in the morning which confirmed that General Harkins had been informed -- had told General Don or told the Generals, I don't know which one he had told, that they would not support the coup and Don told me that all plans were complete and had been checked and rechecked, and it was at this point that I said, you know, they don't go for this knocking off.

Mr. Schwarz. Well, the action report has about twenty-five lines on that meeting?

Mr. Conein. No, sir, it has about fifteen.

Mr. Schwarz. Page 7, are we looking at the same --

Mr. Conein. We are looking now at page 6. It was at that point.

Now the second meeting of that day was when I was pressing General Don, I was more interested in the political plans than I was of the actual goings on. This was a request that had been levied on me by Washington, and what I wanted to do more than anything else is get before it happened what their political plans were.
Mr. Kirbow. Mr. Conoin, is there any doubt in your mind that you in some way, conveyed to either Don or Big Minh the Ambassador's position regarding assassination?

Mr. Conoin. Oh, I conveyed it to Don that they didn't go for it. That is all.

Mr. Schwarz. Why didn't you put that in the action report which you made up in 1963?

Mr. Conoin. I never thought I'd come up here, sir, I'll tell you truthfully. I never thought I'd come up here and be asked that specific question, so there are some things left out of my after action report, such as when we drank beer together or something like that. I left a few things out.

But this -- I never thought I would be here answering that specific question. If I had known that then, I assure you it would have been in there in capital letters.

Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, can I ask one general question?


Senator Baker. I apologize, I am sure that this must have been covered in previous testimony, but Mr. Conoin, what did you conceive your job to be in Vietnam at this time?

Mr. Conoin. My job was to convey the orders from my Ambassador and the instructions from my Ambassador to the people who were planning the coup, to monitor those individuals who were planning the coup, to get as much information so that
our government would not be caught with their pants down.

Senator Baker. Did you, in fact, agree not to thwart the coup and in fact to supply economic and military assistance if the coup succeeded?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, I did.

Senator Huddleston. May I expand on that just a moment?

Senator Tower. Senator Huddleston?

Senator Huddleston. Did you conceive your objective to be to encourage or promote the coup?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Senator Baker. Did you conceive it to be to promote a coup but to preserve deniability?

Mr. Conein. No, sir. I did not see that I was to promote a coup. The coup was going to happen.

Senator Huddleston. You were just an observer?

Mr. Conein. I was an observer and I was a liaison between my government and the people who were plotting the coup.

Senator Mondale. Did you discuss the possibility of discouraging the coup?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Senator Mondale. Why?

Mr. Conein. Because in the monitoring of an incident, if you start in a negative -- I did not, for example, encourage them nor did I discourage them in the sense of answering your question, sir. But I did not go in and say, oh, I think
this is bad, oh, I think this is awful on everything that they said, because I would then be cut off and be blinded.

Senator Mondale. I understand that, but when you met with them as you did --

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Mondale. -- when you assured them that were there a coup they would be assured of support, were you not in fact encouraging the coup even though you say you were neutral, but if you do it, these things will happen?

Senator Schweiker. Senator Mondale, you missed -- there was a wire this morning clearly establishing the State Depart-
ment passed on instructions to go ahead and have a coup, and that was the order of the day.

Senator Tower. I think to clarify this --

Senator Mondale. Is that the Hillsman --

Senator Schweiker. The Hyannis Port wire.

Senator Mondale. May I look at that wire?

Senator Schweiker. Just show it to Senator Mondale, that's all.

Senator Tower. What was brought out this morning was that the CIA and DOD took an official position in opposition to topple Diem, but the State Department took a contrary view that Diem had to go and their function in carrying out national policy was to inform them.

Incidentally, we had lifted PL 480, the
commercial import program to show our displeasure at the Diem
government. What they were doing was telling the plotters that
if they were successful that this would be restored.

Is this essentially correct, Mr. Conein?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Sir, when I did receive the information on the 24th or 25th,
I forget the date, August, which was the famous Hillsman
cable, I conveyed the points of that message to the coup
plotters. I did not take those back at all during any time.

Senator Huddleston. One other question that Mr. Colby
answered this morning, but I'd like your opinion, if there had
been no interest in the United States in deposing Diem, would
there have been a coup?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Huddleston. You think they were going ahead?

Mr. Conein. I think there would have been, sir. The
catalyst that started that was what happened between the
Buddhists --

Senator Schweiker. Who started the Buddhist thing?

Which --

Mr. Conein. The Diem government.

Senator Schweiker. And why, knowing what you assessed,
which was they were a neutral element and all of a sudden
they're antagonistic politically, why did they do it?

Mr. Conein. This I never could understand. I was up there
the day before. Now you're asking for my opinion.

My opinion was that they had a chance to get out of it
and get out of it very gracefully within the first two weeks
after the 8th of May incident in Hue by meeting the demands of
paying off the families of those people who were killed when
the military attacked the pagodas in Hue. If this would have
been done, I think that we would have been much better off.

Again, this is my personal opinion.

Senator Schweiker. If I can interrupt for one more
minute --

Senator Huddleston. Go right ahead.

Senator Schweiker. You said that you thought this was a
key, did I understand, sort of the turning point of the war?

Mr. Conein. No, sir. This was the turning point of the
political situation, sir.

Senator Schweiker. I see.

Mr. Conein. Not the war.

Senator Schweiker. But it could have subsequently affected
the outcome of the war by messing up the stability of the
political establishment, is that right?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Schweiker. Thank you.

Senator Huddleston. You mentioned that Madame Nhu had been
making some inflammatory statements that were unsettling to the
people. Were you referring to the people of Vietnam or the
people of the United States?

I recall some very anti-Buddhist statements that she was making, something to the effect, why not let them burn themselves up, or whatever?

Mr. Conein. Yes.

Senator Huddleston. Very unsympathetic.

Mr. Conein. Very unsympathetic. This upsets -- the reasons being, the Buddhists are not --

Senator Huddleston. Are you referring to the Vietnamese people?

Mr. Conein. I am referring to the Vietnamese people.

The people themselves, they claim to be 80 percent Buddhist.

What happened, people who had never gone to a pagoda after she started making statements to the effect that she'd like to furnish some mustard at a bonzes barbecue, or something to that effect, this made people want to identify themselves against the regime and so they would go.

Senator Huddleston. And this was the principal reason that the United States felt that they had to get rid of the regime, or one of the reasons?

Mr. Conein. Oh, I don't know what we were thinking back here. I was out there. But it was an intolerable situation where you had a President who had a Catholic regime and I happen to be Catholic myself, sir, but who were being oppressive against another religious group in the middle of a war.
Senator Huddleston. And you think that was the catalyst that got the coup started?

Mr. Conein. This was the action I think was the catalyst that brought down the Diem regime.

Mr. Kirbow. Mr. Conein, was it the general opinion among you and your associates in the Agency and the State Department officials there, the country team, so to speak, that the true power in the government at that time was the brother and his wife or the two brothers and not Diem?

Mr. Conein. Well, yes, sir. What had happened was, it was becoming obvious to those people who were keeping abreast of the situation, not only within the State Department, but also within USAID and JUSPOW and other government entities out there that Diem had been out of touch with reality and was not getting the true facts, that everything was being channeled through his brother Nhu. The control of the Republican Youths, which was based on the Hitlerian Youths, with nice blue uniforms, Madam Nhu was the Chief of the Woman’s Solidarity Movement, they had the Female Republican Youths, they controlled the civil guards, they controlled the praetorian guards, the Special Forces, they controlled a vast Secret Police mechanism and all of this, including the police, was all under one man’s control. This was Ngo Dieu Nhu.

In central Vietnam, Ngo Dieu Can, the brother of Ngo Dieu Diem, was the actual war lord and nothing happened up there
without his personal approval.

So what you had, you had a Catholic regime superimposed
and running all of the political, economic and military entities
in the nation and then suppressing what, quote/unquote, was
considered the majority religious group in the country.

Senator Schweiker. The Buddhists?

Mr. Conein. The Buddhists.

Senator Tower. Weren't the Buddhists themselves fraction-
ized?

Mr. Conein. Sir?

Senator Tower. Weren't there two or three different
principal sects of the Buddhists?

Mr. Conein. Oh, there were many principal sects of the
Buddhists. There were three or four different sects, of

Senator Tower. Was this just one sect they were dealing
with, or all of them?

Mr. Conein. Once this happened that there was an attack
on the pagodas in Hue and followed up by an attack in August
on the pagodas in Saigon, this consolidated all the factions
of the Buddhists, so they became a political entity which they
had never been before.

Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, we have a vote in progress.

Senator Mondale. Can I ask one question?

Your background in Vietnam went back many years. You knew
many of these later leaders, Generals, you were working with
much earlier in their careers.

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Mondale. And you spoke Vietnamese?

Mr. Conein. I spoke it very badly, but I spoke it. I
spoke French fluently.

Senator Mondale. But you were picked, I gather, for this
liaison work because of this unique, longstanding personal
relationship with these people.

Mr. Conein. I assume so. I hope things work that way,
Senator.

Senator Mondale. Well, that was the idea, and then you
met with them frequently?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Mondale. And during those occasions when they
were discussing their feelings about Diem and those around him
and the need for change, the coup and so on, did they bring
up assassinations as a possibility?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Senator Mondale. They never did that?

Mr. Conein. The only time that assassination was brought
up was at the meeting I had with Big Minh as one of the options
that he was considering, in October of 1963.

Senator Mondale. Was that the one where he was considering
Nhu and someone else?
Mr. Conoin. Yes. 

Senator Mondale. But not Diem?

Mr. Conoin. Not Diem, yes, sir.

Senator Mondale. But they never once suggested assassination of Diem while you were there?

Mr. Conoin. No, sir, not at that time.

Senator Tower. Gentlemen, why don't we suspend and all go vote and come back?

(A brief recess was taken at 3:26 p.m.)
Senator Tower. Let me suggest to the Committee that we
allow Mr. Conein to proceed with his summary and then, before
we ask questions, because I think some of the questions might
be in that summary and it might allow us to get through our
business in a little more orderly fashion.

So if you would proceed, Mr. Conein.

Mr. Conein. Thank you, sir.

In the latter part of October, specifically the 28th of
October, I was informed by General Don to convey to the
Ambassador, Ambassador Lodge, that they were ready to have a
coup and that one, that I was to stay home and await further
orders, that the coup would be accomplished before the 2nd
of November.

At that time, Ambassador Lodge was preparing to return
to the United States for consultation with the President of
the United States. Ambassador Lodge made that known to me that
he was coming back to the United States.

General Don requested that I convey to the Ambassador that
he do not change his plans to leave on the 31st of October to
come back for consultation to the United States because if he
did change his plans that this might be a signal to the President
and Nhu that something was going on.

I don't know why, but the plans were changed and Admiral
Felt, CINCPAC Commander, came to Vietnam and landed and had an
interview with the President that morning, the day that the coup
was going, or coming off.

The coup started I believe here on the 31st. It was the 31st of November in Saigon. At approximately noon on the 31st of November, I received an emissary telling me that I am to move. I was changing into uniform when the second emissary came and said that I was to proceed immediately per previously arranged plans to the Joint General Staff Headquarters.

I had at that time a military jeep, a Vietnamese driver, two radio sets, a bag, an extra-large briefcase, and I was armed with a .38 revolver. This was for my own personal protection because it was a short-nosed revolver, and you couldn't hit anything further than two feet away from you.

My driver, who was a Vietnamese sergeant who had been detailed to me by the military, was armed with a .45.

We proceeded from my residence and about 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon and on the way to -- or the moment I got the signal that the coup was on, I got onto my radio sets and alerted the Embassy through a voice code which I had and another voice code which had been prearranged, to let them know I was safe.

I proceeded to the General Staff Headquarters, and there was firing going on between the Special Forces unit that was right next to the General Staff Headquarters and some of the elements, the troop elements, at the General Staff Headquarters.

I arrived at the General Staff Headquarters approximately
3:30 in the afternoon. The coup was then on.

At the General Staff Headquarters there was General Big Minh, General Little Minh, General Don, General Khiem, General Le Van Kim, Colonel Lam. — well, a lot of military officers. Most of them were of the General Staff and no unit commanders themselves.

Upon arrival I was with the Generals and they told me, Big Minh told me that they only had a couple of officers that they were in doubt of who had not committed themselves yet, but that it was in progress. They started the attack and it kept going about 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon — I have it here in my notes, but I'm trying to recall it without referring to my notes — our first call came in, maybe 1:00 or 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon, when they called President Diem and asked him to surrender and if he would surrender that they would give him sanctuary and allow him to escape from the country.

This was refused.

About the same time or a little afterwards, there was the communications between Ambassador Lodge and President Diem. I was in both radio and telephonic contact with the Embassy and keeping them posted of the units, the personalities and what was transpiring. I was to convey, one of the first messages I was to convey was that they did not want any U.S. military officer or advisor with any of the attacking units. They did not want any American participation within the coup.
They automatically closed down the airport as they always
do in a coup and proceeded to attack the Central Police
Headquarters, take over the radio station, and get into the
PTT which controlled the communications.

This was very unfortunate, because when they did this --
prior to the coup they had taken out the, I don't know, the
telephone terminals and in the process, instead of leaving my
telephone into my home open they had disconnected it. They
would only leave the Embassy lines open so therefore I was not
warned until practically the last minute to proceed. They had
been trying to get a hold of me since about an hour before they
finally got in contact with me.

And the coup, different units or different elements, had
committed themselves and had progressed. We were not sure till
about 1:00 o'clock the following morning that the coup had
been successful. At that time, it became quite obvious. There
had been three or four communications between President Diem,
Ngo Dinh Nhu, with the General Officers, each time Diem refused
to speak to Big Minh.

And on several occasions I would warn the Embassy that
certain shellings were going to take place, or bombings by
aircraft was going to take place at a certain time, to alert
American personnel who might be living around the area to watch
out or stay under cover because they were firing 105's in the
center of the city.
We had no American casualty, wounded or killed, during this coup. I am talking from the American side, now. The Vietnamese suffered about 100 dead.

At about 6:00 o'clock the following morning -- this is the part where it gets to the point where what we are discussing is most important -- about 6:00 o'clock in the morning just as dawn was coming up, all of the officers that were in the coup and some hangers on who, I don't know how they got there, they were all standing out, including myself, we were standing out on the patio of the Joint General Staff Headquarters. At that time, there had been some discussion going on among the Generals and Colonels who were there about what they were going to do now.

I only heard of one officer who was quite adamant about the elimination of President Diem at that time. This officer, who is now dead, a General by the name of Le, L-e, who was a former Chief of Police under Diem in 1955 or '56. He was for the killing of Diem.

At about 6:40 or 6:30 or 6:40, a telephone call came in from Diem. We still assumed that Diem was at Gailand Palace -- G-a-i-l-o-o-n-g. And it was at this point that Diem talked to Big Minh for the first time.

He asked for full honors if -- he wanted to capitulate, but he wanted to have full honors. Big Minh replied to the President that he could not guarantee full honors, if and during the time that the Vietnamese were still killing one another.
Diem, something to the effect, said that he would order a cease fire at the Palace. My recollection is it was about 10 minutes to 7:00, maybe 10 minutes to 8:00. Now I had been up all night long, I had been working with this for a long time, so I can't say the time exactly, but it was around that time.

There was a cease fire and the people quit firing. At this stage, there were four armored cars and 113's as escort of military police proceeded immediately from the Joint General Staff Headquarters toward Gialong Palace. Big Minh, with his aide, Captain Nhung, got into a sedan and with MTS Corps went out the back road from the General Staff Headquarters toward the back of the golf course and took a different road from the armored cars that went down Conq Le.

The armored column was commanded by a Major Bang -- B-a-n-g -- who had been a former Province Chief at Da Lac Province.

They proceeded to the Palace and they started searching the place. About an hour later -- and this is the part that is important -- when Big Minh left, General Don and General Phien and Le Van Kim were still at the General Staff Headquarters; so was I. At this point, they proceeded to take the pictures of Diem down, cover the statue that was out in front of the General Staff Headquarters and they took all telephone lines out and reverted to radio communication, and I would like to put one thing into place. Between the telephone call at 6:10 or 6:20 in the morning and the second telephone call which came at 1:0
minutes to 7:00 from Diem, I was asked by Big Minh and Don to
get an aircraft. I called the Embassy -- I still had telephone
communication -- I called the Embassy and I spoke to Mr.
who was then Acting Chief of Station and who had been up
all night also. And I told them that it looked like Diem and
Nhu were going to surrender and that I needed an aircraft.

I was reminded that the United States government had no
intention of immediately recognizing the new regime, or the
junta; secondly, that President Diem would be taken to the
first country that offered him asylum; thirdly, that they did
not want the aircraft to land in a country other than the
country that was going to give asylum. For example, and I am
just setting this as an example, assume that France was the
first country to grant President Diem asylum. They did not want
an aircraft that would have to land, say in Delhi, or Carachi
or Teirun or anyplace else where Diem would get out and start
forming a government in exile.

Senator Baker. Was there any airplane that would fly that
far?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir. We had C-130's. They could not
fly that far. We had KC-135's, and I was told that they could
not get an aircraft for twenty-four hours, therefore it was un
and the nearest KC-135 was in Guam, and they could not get an
aircraft for twenty-four hours.

I informed both General Minh and General Don that I could
not get an aircraft for twenty-four hours, and -- so when I
Minh had gone, General Don was preparing for the reception of
the President and his brother. We started -- I wasn't doing it,
but we got troops in and we cleaned up the whole area, policed
it out and brought in a large table with green felt on it and
they were preparing to call in the Press so that they would have
coverage of Diem resigning.

Vice President Tho -- T-h-o -- was to be the new Premier
of the government and he was to accept the resignation and he
would then become the head of the government.

The thing, the most important fact that they were afraid
of was that they would not be accepted to other governments,
would not be recognized, so they wanted a legal transition.

Also, they prepared to house both Diem and Nhu in the General
Staff Headquarters under proper security. That was the way it
was at the time I departed, when they said -- General Don told
me they were bringing in the Press and I saw movie cameras and
everything coming in, and I said this is the time for me to get
out, and I went home.

I got home, by then my telephone was re-established and I
got a telephone call, come to the Embassy. I went to the
Embassy and I was informed that I had to find Diem. I was tired
and fed up and I said, who gave those orders. They let me know
that those orders came from the President of the United States.

So I went back out to the General Staff Headquarters,
getting there about 10:15, 10:30 in the morning. In the meantime, 
they had moved the group from the General Staff Headquarters to 
the office upstairs and the Officer's Club at the General Staff 
Headquarters which was right off of the entrance to the General 
Staff Headquarters.

The Ministers of the former government were all, except 
one, present and had turned over to the junta, and they were in 
the process of being talked to and the questioning them and what 
have you. I walked in and I saw General Big Minh -- I saw all 
the Generals, everybody else, but I saw General Big Minh's aid, 
because General Big Minh and Le Van Kim were talking to Minis-
ters, to former Ministers of the government.

I told the aide that I wanted to talk to Big Minh and he 
said, what it is about, and I said I wanted to know where Diem 
was. Big Minh came over and I explained to him that it was 
important to the United States government to know the location 
of President Diem. Big Minh told me they committed suicide.

I looked at him, and I said, where. He said they were in 
the Catholic Church at Cho Long, and they committed suicide.

I think I lost my cool at that point, because I think I 
told Big Minh, look, you're a Buddhist, I'm a Catholic. If they 
committed suicide at that church and the priest holds Mass 
tonight, that story won't hold water. I said, where are they?

He said they are at the General Staff Headquarters, behind 
the General Staff Headquarters, did I want to see them. An:
said no. He said, why not? And I said, well, if by chance one
of a million of the people believe you that they committed
suicide in Church and I see that they have not committed suicide
and I know differently, then if it ever leaks out, I am in
trouble. I refused to be a witness to it.

They had been killed.

I returned to the Embassy and so reported and a message
was sent back to Washington immediately that they were dead,
that they were at the General Staff Headquarters.

Mr. Kirbow. Excuse me, Mr. Conoin. Did you report that
they had committed suicide as they had told you at the Embassy
or did you report what you actually knew?

Mr. Conoin. I reported exactly was I said, that I was
told that they committed suicide but I refused to witness how
they had died, because I didn't want to get myself involved
in their death, period.

Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, I'm not quite sure how you
can confirm or deny how they could have committed suicide in
the church if their bodies were at the General Staff Head-
quartes?

Mr. Conoin. Well according to the original story that they
gave out that they both committed suicide in the church --

Senator Baker. How could you have told or not told by
looking at the bodies? What difference would it have made?

Mr. Conoin. I know the Vietnamese well enough, Senator.
That they leave a lot of marks on people.

Senator Baker. So you don't have any doubt in your mind?

Mr. Conein. Oh, no, sir.

Mr. Kirbow. Did you later see the pictures of the body?

Mr. Conein. I saw the pictures in, I think, a few days afterwards. I saw the pictures of it and then there were the pictures of it being handed around.

Senator Mondale. Did they tell you that they had taken poison?

Mr. Conein. Well, no, they just told me that they had committed suicide. I didn't want to delve into it.

Mr. Kirbow. Would you tell the committee the nature of the apparent deaths from the photographs?

Mr. Conein. Oh, yes. Diem had been shot and he had a bloody face and his head was turned over to one side and it was obvious that his hands had been tied behind his back.

Ngo Diem Nhu had multiple wounds and also you could tell that he had been stabbed many times, besides being shot. You could tell, and by the running of the blood.

Mr. Kirbow. Did you later determine in some manner to your own knowledge how the deaths actually occurred?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Mr. Kirbow. Would you tell the Committee?

Mr. Conein. This is something I swore I would never tell.

It appeared, first of all, when Diem and Nhu were going to
make confessions at the church, they were using a telephone line
which they could contact, through the Palace switchboard, so it
would appear that they were still in the Palace and someone, I
don't know who, reported where they were.
Senator Tower. So they were actually in the church at
Cho Long?
Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, they were in the church. As you
go in -- you don't know it, but Ngo Dien Nhu was a chain smoker,
continuously smoking, and he was out in the yard, the little
courtyard they have around the church, and he was walking around
and he and his brother were walking back and forth, they had
one aide with them.
Mr. Schwarz. Not in custody of the Generals?
Mr. Conein. Not in touch with the Generals, but somebody
reported it.
First of all, you must understand -- now this is specula-
tion on my part now; I'm not saying how it happened, because I
don't know how this part happened in fact, but they had so many
pictures of Diem hung up on public buildings and in every office
and his picture was all over, like Ho Chi Minh's picture was
all over Saigon now, it was all over, so therefore, he was very
well known, plus people had seen him, they know him, so it wasn't
very difficult for anybody to spot him and make a report.
General Mai Huu Xuan and then-Colonel, later General,
Duong Ngoc Lam took off with armored cars and went to the church.
There is a little bit of difference of opinion as to exactly what happened, as exactly what happened at the church.

Mai Huu Xuan reported to the President, saluted and told him to get into the armored car. Ngo Dien Nhu protested and asked for a sedan, and this led to an argument. Anyway, they were shoved into the armored car and were told by the commander of the column, who was Colonel Lam, that they had to use the armored car for their physical protection.

Senator Tower. Was that Colonel Lam, was he later ICORPS Commander?

Mr. Conein. No, sir, this was a different Lam. Duong Ngoc Lam was a fat little guy who wore a moustache who used to command the civil guard, later became a General, yes, sir, but he was not the ICORPS commander. He's also dead now.

Anyway, they were coming back with the column, who were in radio communications with Big Minh and his entourage and when they found out, when Big Minh found out that they were prisoners, he gave an order to his aide, Captain Nhung, and Captain Nhung killed them, in the armored car. The bodies were taken directly to the General Staff Headquarters and later on in the afternoon they were removed from the General Staff Headquarters to Clinique St. Paul.

Senator Tower. Were they killed right after they were put into the armored car?

Mr. Conein. No, they were killed on the way back, when
Big Minh's group, with his aide, crossed the column, halted it, and Captain Nhung stepped into it and killed them.

Now other people who were in the armored car, I assume -- I do not know who did the stabbing wounds or anything else. I do know the two were killed by Captain Nhung.

We knew this within a matter of hours, exactly what happened, and I reported it and it was reported back here at Headquarters exactly what happened.

That is the story, sir.

Senator Huddleston. Do you know that Big Minh gave the order that they be killed?

Mr. Conein. I have it on very good authority of very many people that Big Minh gave the order, not only of -- one thing I can say, Senator, is that I kept contact with the junta until the day that the United States officially recognized the South Vietnamese government. There were several countries that recognized, and I was acting as the liaison officer for the Ambassador to the junta during this period of approximately ten days or two weeks.

Senator Huddleston. Is it true that Big Minh and the Generals had made a definite appointment with the Generals to come to the Palace, at which time President Diem would surrender?

Mr. Conein. No, they didn't make a definite appointment.

Senator Huddleston. They didn't go to the Palace expectin.
Mr. Conein. Yes, Big Minh went by himself. He had Phan Ngoc Tau who knew the Palace the best, Major Bang -- B-a-n-g -- who was in the armored column. I can say that about an hour after they left, Major Bang came back and I asked Major Bang, whom I had known up in Hanoi back in 1945, I asked him, I said, what were your orders? And he said, the orders going through the Palace was that we were not to fire unless we were fired upon. And I said, well, did you find them? And he said, no, we didn't find them yet. They had not known at that time where they were.

Senator Huddleston. They expected him to be at the Palace?

Mr. Conein. They expected him to be at the Palace. Everybody assumed, including myself, that they were at the Palace.

Senator Huddleston. Is it your judgment that at that time that they had expected to take them peacefully?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Huddleston. And to send them out of the country?

Mr. Conein. What was going to transpire was that they were going to take them peacefully. Big Minh himself, as the leader of the junta, was to take escort them back to the General Staff Headquarters where they would have the green table, and President Diem was to sign over power to the Vice President. They were going to be held until I could get the aircraft, and then they were going to be flown out of the country, because
immediately after the signing that Diem would get through the

ceremony of turning over the powers to the Vice President, Tho,
he would ask for asylum and this would be broadcast.

Senator Huddleston. Then what reason do you believe that
Diem left the Palace? Was it to go to the church, or was he
really attempting to slip --

Mr. Conein. No, sir, we didn't find this out until
afterwards, because it was very baffling. I don't know how
they got out. Everybody talked about secret tunnels; there
were secret tunnels. There was a passage, because the Gailong
Palace -- now you have to understand that the Doc Lap Palace,
U-o-c L-a-p, was the Presidential Palace before the new one was
made, that belonged to the Emperor Bao Dai. The administrative --
the French Governor General's palace was in Gailong Palace.

When the Palace was bombed in February of '62 by the two
Vietnamese Air Force pilots, they moved out of that Palace and
took over the Gailong Palace.

The Gailong Palace was right behind the Saigon City Hall,
which was then, when it was constructed, was run by the French.

Well, between the Governor General's Palace, which was the
Gailong Palace, and the City Hall was about a half a block.

What they had was a passage underneath, just like you have here,
so that servants won't have to go out in the hot noonday sun
and get a paper signed, they could go underneath.

And what President Diem and Nhu and his aide did was to no
down through that, walk out in front of the City Hall, got into an automobile and drove on up to Mai Tuyen's house in Choldlan.

Senator Huddleston. What I'm trying to determine was what their motive was? Were they in fact trying to evade being apprehended, or were they going to church?

Mr. Conein. Sir, there are a lot of things not in this report, one of them is the Operation Bravo, and I hate to get into this thing, Bravo I and Bravo II.

Senator Huddleston. All I want to know is were they trying to avoid --

Mr. Conein. No, sir, because first of all, they thought, when the coup started, that it was their coup.

Senator Huddleston. Well, according to other information --

Senator Schweiker. Wait a minute. You lost me.

Senator Huddleston. According to other information --

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Huddleston. -- they had made an arrangement with Big Minh that they would be at the Palace at a certain time, and that Big Minh should come and take them and that they would peacefully surrender and that they would be given passage out of the country.

Now as I understand it, Big Minh and the column that you talk about, the armored cars, went to the Palace with that assumption they were going to be there.
Mr. Conein. Yes, sir

Senator Huddleston. When they arrived, they were not there.

Mr. Conein. That's right, sir.

Senator Huddleston. They did not know where they were?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Senator Huddleston. The conclusion I draw is that this was a breach of faith, and that it angered the Generals, and because of that, when they did find them, they killed them.

Now is that accurate or not?

Mr. Conein. That is a very accurate way of describing it.

The reason being is that, if I can make a personal observation.

Big Minh is a very proud man and those of you who have been to Southeast Asia know that face is very important, and at the last moment when he lost face, when he was going up there in all of his splendor with a sedan and everything else to receive them, this probably was one of the things that ticked him off and he gave the order.

Senator Huddleston. Is it your opinion that if they had carried out the pre-arranged plan and had surrendered that the scenario would have been much as you described? That they would have had the Press Conference?

Mr. Conein. If they had carried it out and if Big Minh would have found them there would have been too many people present at the palace for them to even attempt --
Senator Muddleston. That they would probably be alive today?

Mr. Conein. They would probably be alive today. I might also add that three days afterwards I was instrumental in getting Ngo Dinh Nhu's children out of the country.

Senator Tower. Senator Hart, do you want to proceed?

Senator Hart of Michigan. I think that clarifies it.

Senator Schweiker. Mr. Chairman?

Senator Tower. Senator Schweiker?

Senator Hart. Well, let me ask, the understanding that at no point in the climactic days so far as you knew, was there any discussion of killing Diem?

Mr. Conein. No, sir, there had never been any discussion of any time about Diem himself being killed by anybody. I will make one statement that many people -- and I'm talking about the General and other people -- wanted Diem to be around. They could not stand Nhu and Madam Nhu. This was an opinion of the people.

The Generals themselves wanted legal turnover of the government. They wanted international recognition of their coup. They did want that.

Senator Tower. Senator Schweiker?

Senator Schweiker. You made a point I didn't understand. You said that it was Diem's own coup that he thought was unfolding?

Mr. Conein. Yes, because I -- I actually hate to get in the...
because it is in this report here. It is a very complicated
thing and you have to understand the devious mind of an Oriental,
and I'll tell you what, I spent many years out there and I still
don't understand it, but I can understand why they do certain
things, but don't ask me why.

In August of 1963, General Ton That Dinh had been Military
Governor, had been appointed Military Governor of Saigon and
Commander of the Third Corps. General Dinh was therefore in
power and working for Ngo Dinh Nhu and Ngo Dinh Diem directly
in August of 1963.

When the military curfew and Military Governor of
Saigon's powers were taken away on the 18th of September of
1963, Ton That Dinh considered himself the hero of Saigon. He
saved the Diem regime in August.

He also, during that time, had made plans to have what we
call Bravo I and Bravo II that Diem -- or Nhu -- would have his
own coup, Dien and Nhu would go down to Vung Tau as if they
were escaping and there would be immediately a countercoup put
on by -- all instigated by Nhu -- a countercoup put on by Diem
at the same time and bring back Nhu and Diem by popular
acclamation.

So, in the beginning of the coup, Ton That Dinh, who was
sometimes erratic -- or, he's still alive; I don't want to say
he's erratic -- or sometimes a little funny, very devious, he
had convinced Ngo Dinh Nhu that he was going to go through...
this plan. So they assumed, at 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon when troops were moving and everything else that it was their coup. This was Ton That Dinh's plan.

What they didn't know was Ton That Dinh was the military commander of Saigon for the coup.

Senator Schweiker. Double agent, as we say.

Mr. Conein. Well, he was triple about that time.

Senator Morgan. Where is he now?

Mr. Conein. Sir?

Senator Morgan. Where is he now?

Mr. Conein. I don't know. I do not know if he escaped this last thing or not. I don't know if he got out. He was a Senator.

Senator Huddleston. That explains it.

Senator Schweiker. That's why he was a triple agent.

Mr. Conein. He was a Senator, an elected Senator of the Vietnamese and he was the military chairman of the Senate Military Affairs Committee in Vietnam.

Senator Mondale. You had a substantial amount of money in piasters in your private safe which you were asked to bring with you to the Joint General Staff Headquarters, right?

Mr. Conein. I had, and I don't recall exactly the amount of money. There is someplace somewhere an accounting of the money and also the signature of General Don who received some of this money. I don't recall -- and I'm telling you
truthfully, I don't recall if I had 3 1/2 million or 5 million piasters. I said I brought a little brown bag, it was one of these diplomatic sort of courier bags and it was stuffed with money.

I had made some certain contingency plans for my own protection because it became obvious to me that if anything happened that my family might suffer, and also that if the Diem government found out that I was involved in a conspiracy, if we may call it that, that I probably would have a very inefficient Vietcong incident -- in other words, I would be blown up or assassinated or something like that and it would be blamed on the Vietcong for doing that.

Therefore, I took certain precautions.

I had made arrangements to have one FA Special Forces team available upon signal to protect my house when the coup came off. I had also made arrangements to have a military team with proper type of communications equipment so that I would, no matter what happened, I would always be in communication.

I also--

Senator Mondale. Was your family with you in Saigon?

Mr. Conlein. Yes. I had just had a daughter born three months before, and one of the things I wanted was, they could kill me but I didn't want my family to pay for what I did.

Therefore, I had one complete FA team of the Fifth Special Forces at my house during the coup.
I had made a contingency plan for funds. Now the amount of funds -- like I tell you, I don't recall exactly how much, it was 3 1/2 or 5 million piasters.

Senator Baker. How much is that in dollars?

Mr. Conlin. About $70,000. Now this is roughly, I'm figuring it up now in my head, I'm not a mathematician. And I took this money and put it in the bag, the brown bag, the reason being that for the first twenty-four hours there were two things that were vitally important. There were certain units that would be diverted at the last moment. These units were going to be put into a situation they did not know of, so therefore they did not have the rice and the bread. That was the most important thing, rice and bread.

The second thing was that we did not want, under any circumstances, of any personality who would be shot or killed during the coup that there wasn't a gesture made to pay off the family immediately. This is something that you gentlemen probably don't know, but there are no insurances in Vietnam in the proper sense that we know of, so there's always, when somebody is killed, there is a sum of money given.

The other thing was, we had to have volunteer medical facilities available in addition to the military facilities. We wanted to be sure that there were certain medical facilities so that we could take care of our own wounded.

Well, these things have to be prepared, gentlemen, and there
wasn't a lot of money -- it was a lot of money in plasters.

All of these monies have been accounted for, they were accounted for by me, they were signed for by the General, and -- for each payment. Now, I do not know where those receipts are.

Senator Mondale. Could I? I'm not getting at -- there's no implication, I hope, about the management of money. I'm just trying to find out what the money was for.

Mr. Conein. It was to pay for food --

Senator Mondale. In other words, you have something like $70,000 in plasters, give or take whatever the arithmetic, and how long had you had that money?

Mr. Conein. I had had that money since approximately, I would say around the 24th of October. I had that in a safe in my house.

Senator Mondale. And did that money come to you through the CIA?

Mr. Conein. I requested it from the Finance Office, yes, sir.

Senator Mondale. He provided you the money, you brought it out and kept it in your home and then when was the first call for the money? Was that the day --

Mr. Conein. I took it with me.

Senator Mondale. You had it in your home?

Mr. Conein. Yes, I had it in my home, and when I changed into uniform to go out to General Staff --
Senator Mondale. But they asked you to bring money at that time, did they?

Mr. Conein. I had made arrangements that I would bring a certain sum of contingency funds.

Senator Mondale. With General Don?

Mr. Conein. With General Don.

Senator Mondale. He asked you to bring the money, didn't he? Did I understand you to say bring as much money as you could lay your hands on?

Mr. Conein. No, not as much money as I could. If it were that, I would have taken a b-bag full. But the thing of it was, it was only for a small sum of money, a contingency fund for a twenty-four hour or thirty-six hour period, which I did not know at that time.

Senator Mondale. What did you understand that money to be for? For what purposes?

Mr. Conein. The money was to pay for those units who, at the last moment, when their officers would give the order to march, who had no time to get their food, to draw the supplies.

Senator Mondale. Anything else?

Mr. Conein. To pay for medical --

Senator Mondale. Expenses.

Mr. Conein. -- expenses.

Senator Mondale. All right.

Anything else?
Mr. Conein. To pay the death benefits for any person, you know, killed.

Senator Mondale. Did he tell you that's what he wanted it for, or did you know that that is what it was for?

Mr. Conein. I knew that's what it was for.

Senator Tower. I would like to bring up at this point, Director Colby has testified about this.

Mr. Schwarz. Not in the same detail.

Senator Tower. Not in the same detail.

Senator Mondale. Well, I'm sorry. I was not here this morning.

Senator Tower. That's all right.

Senator Mondale. So in that sense, we were bringing, through you, assets which they would use to help carry out and pay the costs of the coup.

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Mondale. All right.

Now, was there any discussion about whether it was risky for you to be personally present at the JCS or anywhere else with these Generals at or near the time of the coup?

Did you have any discussions about that?

Mr. Conein. There were several discussions about my personal security prior to the coup. There were also discussions with me because I was worried about my family in case --

Senator Mondale. Well, it was clear that this was very
Tricky for you, but apart from that, was there any question about whether your presence as an American officer would link us, if known, to the coup?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Senator Mondale. Because I think you mentioned you got out of it fast when you saw newsmen.

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, I was scared.

Senator Mondale. You didn't want to be seen there.

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Senator Mondale. You didn't want to be seen there, because you didn't want our association, whatever it might be, with this group known to the public?

Mr. Conein. I did not want --

Senator Mondale. Is that correct? That's in here?

Mr. Schwarz. Yes.

Senator Tower. You were ordered in and ordered out, weren't you?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Mondale. Well, you left yourself?

Mr. Conein. I left myself.

Senator Mondale. Without any orders.

Mr. Conein. At the moment I saw that they were going to bring the Press in, for the capitulation of President Diem, was at the time that they told me to get the hell out, General Don said, get the hell out, we're bringing in the Press.
Senator Mondale. So were there discussions about the wisdom of having you there at all at any time; or did they need a liaison?

Mr. Conein. No, sir, it wasn't a question of a discussion in the sense that you're talking about, Senator. You must understand the relationship. I was part and parcel of the whole conspiracy, so if something went wrong, they would go down the drain with me. We were all going down the drain together.

Senator Tower. Can we suspend at this point?

Let us go vote.

(A brief recess was taken.)

Senator Tower. Phil, I believe you had the floor when we suspended.

Senator Hart of Michigan. I have no questions.

Senator Tower. All right.

Fritz?

Mr. Schwarz. To go back to the telephone conversation about the airplane.

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Mr. Schwarz. After you obtained the word that you couldn't get a plane for twenty-four hours, was that word passed on to Mr. Ngo Dien Diem?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

This was a telephone conversation, because President Diem had talked to Big Minh and to General Don and it was the first
time during the whole coup that the President had had a chance to
talk to Big Minh. Up to that point, he refused at all points to
talk to Big Minh.

Mr. Schwarz. And in any event, you are quite sure that
the word about the plane being available but not being available
for twenty-four hours didn't get to Mr. Diem?

Mr. Conein. I am positive, because the reason being it was
after the conversation with President Diem that both Generals
Don and Big Minh came to me and asked me about getting an air-
plane to get them out. It was after they had hung up, and this
was when I called the Embassy and spoke to Mr. [stirred] 06

Mr. Schwarz. And he gave you then three reasons, or three
comments, about the airplane? He gave you those right over the
phone, or did he call you back?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, right over the phone and I trans-
mitted that message back and I don't recall if Big Minh had
walked out but I know that General Don had been told by me
exactly that it would take twenty-four hours.

Senator Tower. Senator Mondale had the floor when we
suspended.

Senator Mondale. Just one question.

How did you arrive at the figure of money that you had in
your possession with your local office there? How was that figure
determined, was it just a ballpark amount?

Mr. Conein. The amount of money?
TOP SECRET

2. Mr. Conoin. That was all that would fit in this briefcase.
3. and I wasn't going to haul two briefcases.
4. Senator Mondale. No, what did you -- go to the Director
5. and say, I'd like this much?
6. Mr. Conoin. No, sir, I had asked for a certain sum but I
7. could not put it all in this briefcase. This is why I cannot
8. answer you really, if I spent 3 1/2 or 5 1/2.
9. I do know that when I went back to check my safe, one of
10. the packages of 250,000 piasters had fallen over the back end
11. of the little guide rail, you know, that keeps the safe drawers --
12. and one of those packages had fallen back and I remember taking
13. that and I said, look, I've got some left, and I turned it back
14. in and got a receipt for it. So this is why I cannot tell you
15. exactly the amount. They know, and I would say roughly it's in
16. the $70,000 figure.
17. Senator Mondale. Thank you.
18. Senator Morgan. I have just one question.
19. Senator Tower. I believe Mr. Colby testified this morning
20. it was 5 million piasters.
21. Mr. Conoin. Yes, sir, but I didn't spend it all.
22. Senator Tower. Senator Morgan?
23. Senator Morgan. I just have one question, Mr. Conoin.
24. Do you have any reason to believe that there was any undue
25. delay on the part of the Embassy in making a plane available?
Mr. Conein. No, sir, the fact being that an aircraft of that size, it would take -- because it would have to come from Guam, sir, then the pilots would have to brief and all the things on how to go. Now you must understand also that the airport was closed down at that time. No aircraft were coming in or leaving without special permission.

Senator Morgan. Would it have come to Tan Son Nhut?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Morgan. Now did I understand you to tell Senator Mondale that General Minh never knew that it would take twenty-four hours?

Mr. Conein. I don't know whether he knew it or not. I say that I know that I told this to General Don. I can't recall this was all -- everything is over with, you know?

Senator Morgan. But the main thing in my mind, in your opinion there was no undue delay in making the plan available?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Senator Morgan. Well that was the question that was in my mind.

Senator Tower. I think we were all a little confounded by that this morning, but I think the explanation of that is that the airplane had to fly directly to the country of asylum and couldn't stop anywhere else. That would require longrange aircraft like the KC-135. You couldn't make it in a C-47.

Senator Morgan. Which would not normally be available on
Taiwan?

Mr. Conein. No, sir, it was not available outside of Guam or Hawaii at that time, sir. Later on they were available in Subic Bay and Clark Field.

Senator Tower. Senator Baker?

Senator Baker. Thank you.

Who laid on that requirement that it be a nonstop flight to the country of asylum?

Mr. Conein. This I do not know, if it was the Ambassador or if this was just an assumption of the people who knew the Ambassador's thinking. This I do not know, sir. I do not know if it came from the White House or the State Department. I do not know.

Senator Baker. Do we know from other materials?

Mr. Kirbow. We assume that McGeorge Bundy might know on Monday.

Mr. Schwarz. We don't know.

Did you have an assumption from the conversation with Mr. [ Scratch ] that he was prepared for your question? I mean, he came back with an answer that had three rather complicated points.

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir. I assumed that the moment that I would get the go ahead from the junta that they wanted the aircraft that I would levy the requirement and the Embassy and the military were prepared to levy the requirement immediately.

Mr. Schwarz. No, but did you assume from your conversation.
with Mr. Conlain that he was prepared for your question in light of the complex answer that he came back with?

Mr. Conlain. Sir, I don't know. I would assume that he had been prepared and obviously if he was prepared that well that somebody must have talked to him. I wasn't there. I was at the other place.

Mr. Schwarz. Just to make sure the record is clear on it, but for those rules laid down in the telephone conversation, there were airplanes that the United States had control over which could have been used?

Mr. Conlain. Yes, sir.

If -- for example, sir, let me point out one thing, that if it had been Philippines Islands that granted asylum first that we would then not have had to use a C-135, we could have used General Harkins' C-130 which was a converted VIP plane.

But at that time and under those circumstances there was no way of knowing which country -- assume that it was Japan, we did not want the airplane to land in Taiwan.

Mr. Schwarz. But that was a matter of choice?

Mr. Conlain. A matter of choice.

Senator Baker. What do you mean, "we didn't"?

Mr. Conlain. We -- according to my instructions, were that the airplane was not to make a stop.

Senator Baker. What do you mean, "we"? You said you didn't know who laid on that requirement. Was that your
wish?

Mr. Conein. I say we don't know. I'm talking now, we
the United States government, I'm assuming, because the gentleman
has asked me a question and I assume that he had talked to
the Ambassador.

Senator Baker. Any further questions, any members of the
Committee?

I reckon that's it.

Mr. Conein. Thank you very much, sir.

Senator Tower. Thank you, Mr. Conein. We appreciate your
testimony.

We will ask you back to discuss the matter that Senator
Baker brought up.

Mr. Conein. At your convenience, sir.

(The questions by Senator Baker follows:)

TOP SECRET
Senator Tower. Let's go back on the record.

Senator Baker. Mr. Conein, while we're waiting for the other Committee members to return, I have a few questions on other matters and we can arrange the transcript so that it will not interrupt the flow of your other testimony, if that's all right with you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Tower. All right.

Senator Baker. Are you acquainted with a man named A. J. Woolston-Smith?

Mr. Conein. A. J. Woolston? No, sir.

Senator Baker. A private investigator in New York City?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Senator Baker. Do you have any information about the involvement of the CIA, the DEA or its predecessor -- what was the predecessor?

Mr. Conein. BNDD.

Senator Baker. -- in any domestic assassination?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Senator Baker. Do you have any knowledge of any assassinations or any attempted assassinations of persons related to international drug traffic by persons connected or affiliated with the CIA or the DEA?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Senator Baker. None at all?
Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Senator Baker. Do you have any knowledge of any CIA involvement in any drug traffic for profit in Vietnam?

Mr. Conein. No, sir, I do not.

Senator Baker. Have you ever been involved in or had any knowledge of the purchase or the manufacturer or sale of assassination devices to or by a Federal government agency?

Mr. Conein. Sir, I think you are referring to something that was asked by Senator Weicker one time when I was looking at Title III equipment, which is bugging equipment for the Drug Enforcement Administration. I was shown some, without solicitation, I was shown some devices, that were booby-trap type devices. I would like to make it a part of the record that the Secret Service has been completely informed of this and also the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms know of these devices.

And I also furnished a complete brochure of all the description of these assassination type devices to the Secret Service.

Senator Baker. Have you got a copy of that brochure?

Mr. Conein. No, sir, I do not.

Senator Morgan. Senator Baker, would you yield on that?

Senator Baker. Yes.

Senator Morgan. Would you repeat that name again? I'm sorry, when you say non-related, I started reading the paper.
Would you give me that name again?

Senator Baker. The name?

Senator Morgan. Yes, sir.

Senator Baker. Mr. A. J. Woolston-Smith.

Senator Morgan. Was that somewhere around Alexandria here?

Senator Baker. Well, he's been here, and he's been in New York City, he's been in St. Louis, and I understand at one time he had an office on the West Coast.

Senator Morgan. Would you add to that the name Paris Theodore, with regards to any kind of assassination devices?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Mr. Schwarz. Who did show you the assassination devices?

Mr. Conein. This was, I think, Senator Weicker asked me specifically in January, I don't recall the date, that he had a report that I had seen assassination devices. I had testified personally to the Senator with an attorney present, and while there I told him that there was another one of my staff members had been present and had seen the same devices and he called for the staff member who verified everything that I had said, and I did not open my mouth during the questioning of this other member of my staff.

Mr. Schwarz. Who showed you the assassination devices.

Mr. Conein. Sir?

Mr. Schwarz. Who showed you the assassination devices?
Senator Tower. Could we suspend this line of questioning for a moment?
Senator Tower. Off the record.

(Discussion off the record.)

Senator Baker. I will refrain from asking the question, but I wish the next time that we ask, Mr. Conein to come back here and bring with him the paraphernalia, the devices, and any brochures that he has.

Senator Tower. Do you have any of the devices?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Senator Tower. Do you have the brochure?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, I have a copy of the brochure that I furnished the Secret Service.

Senator Baker. I might ask this one thing, or mention this one thing, rather. You might be prepared to describe to us how you came to have the brochure, particularly with reference to whether you solicited it or were solicited and whether this was the only one that you ever had, and similar material.

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Senator Tower. Anything further?

All right.
Senator Tower. If no one has anything to bring up at this time, the Committee is adjourned until Monday afternoon at 2:00 o'clock.

(Whereupon, at 5:04 p.m., the hearing in the above-entitled matter was recessed, to reconvene at 2:00 o'clock p.m., Monday, June 23, 1975).

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TOP SECRET
I. BACKGROUND:

1. Without analyzing the various coup plots advanced to CAS prior to the 3 May 1963 Nhu incident, it can be stated at the outset that subsequent to this event, the continuing Buddhist critics presented both a springboard and a coalescent factor variously used by both long-standing and new critics of the Diem regime for intensified plotting, ranging from a palace coup to direct military action for Diem's overthrow of the regime. Through early July, the various plots of which we became aware could not be seriously judged with the exception of the 8 July indication that General Tran Van Don, then Commander of the Army, in concert with a few of the general officers, had plans for the overthrow of the government to include the removal of the entire Nhu family from power. General Don as well as several other general officers had for a period of a year or more registered dissatisfaction over various policies and instabilities of the Diem regime, but at no time did there appear such planning in depth to warrant serious consideration of the probability of action. The 8 July report, however, reinforced by statements from various military sources, including a 9 July report from General Le Van Ngien that a coup would soon occur, warranted close and careful examination of the intent and ability of a combination of the general officers to take action against the regime. Perhaps the most significant, and without a doubt most adverse factor militating against a military coup to occur in the pre-21 August period was the confrontation by Ngo Dinh Nhu on 11 July of the general officers which in retrospect must be seen as an inspired move to clearly indicate the regime's awareness of coup plotting, to issue a clear warning against action, and most important, to confuse and divide the general officers.

2. The most serious judgment to emerge from this period was the strong speculation that Ngo Dinh Nhu was plotting a power move against President Diem. This was subsequently reinforced by the content of the Who's Who prepared for the anniversary of Nhu's ascension of the grand leadership of the Republican Youth. At that time, however, such speculation derived only from reported reactions to the general officers and implications of Nhu's increasing use of the
Republican Youth Movement to support the assumption of power by non-communism.

C. The first chapter of the Buddhist crisis culminating in the declaration of martial law on 21 August 1963, provided an overt peg upon which various professional dissenters could hang their vocalization of dissidence, crystallized latent dissatisfaction among newly arisen opposition groups and convinced many of the professional ability that the war against the Viet Cong could not be won if the political situation were allowed to deteriorate.

4. The coup d'etat plotting between 23 and 24 August 1963 in retrospect appears as a somewhat desperate move by the general officers to take action against the Diem regime. An analysis of this coup plot points up several reasons for its failure to materialize, the most significant of which are as follows:

(a) Contact and knowledge among the American community was too proliferated and must be considered as having adversely affected the security of the operation;

(b) At some point, there occurred a fabricated or actual leak to the GVN which resulted in local press attacks against OAS and foreign adventurers;

(c) At no time did the coup planners control sufficient troop strength to permit rapid and efficient takeover of the palace or other key installations, the forces available to the coup principals were completely outsold by those forces under the control of the GVN with the certain realization of a blood bath if precipitate action were launched;

(d) At no time did the coup principals indicate an awareness of political strategy required to dispose of the inci-dents in the palace. Although there appeared to be some recognition of the desirability of civilian politicians participating in whatever government emerges, even this was realized when General Le Duc Van Minh indicated that a military junta was inevitable for at least the first year period after the coup d'etat. There was no indication of a solid alliance between a purely political faction and the military. By the same token, there was not any indication during that period that the dissident elements had any plan to make rule or innovations of policy to present other than a continuation of major
programs of the GVN.

5. The period between 2 September, the first overt confirmation in the Times of Vietnam banner headline story entitled "U.S. Marines, VIETNAMESE NAVY Battle," and 1 November can be significantly characterized by the following:

(a) The Diem regime launched a consistent and calculated policy of confrontation with CAS, USARVN and various other elements of the U.S. Government;

(b) The Diem regime pursued a policy of searching for alternatives to U.S. aid and a halt-tightening on its own economy;

(c) The Diem regime at no time during this period demonstrated even the most superficial awareness of the profundity of dissatisfaction and dissonance among the articulate and opinion-forming segments of the urban population;

(d) The U.S. pursued a policy of graduated pressures in the economic area calculated to force the Diem regime to effect basic reforms necessary for the successful conduct of the war against the Viet Cong and to win popular support for the GVN headed by Diem;

(e) The exacerbation of the conflict between the U.S. and the GVN by the continued public inflammatory statements of Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu, both while she was in South Vietnam and during her visit to Belgrade, Rome, Paris and the United States; these statements were well replayed in the Vietnamese and international press;

(f) The heightening hostile foreign public opinion fanned by the international press;

(g) The inability or failure (the former is most likely) of President Diem and Counselor Nhu to neutralize or eliminate the dissident general officers;

(h) The deterioration of the economic stability of the nation epitomized by the fluctuating value of the currency; increase in black-marketing, rise in prices of some consumer commodities, the marked decrease of imports, and disappearance of gold from the market.

(i) Continued self-implantation by South Viet fries.

8. In summary, the deteriorating political and economic situation during this, the second chapter of the conflict.
dreds provided the generals with the situation they required to outline their planning for a coup d’etat, an objective they had never abandoned but had merely curtailed.

II. A REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS/CONTACTS AFTER 2 OCTOBER 1963.

2 October
Conceal-General Dinh meeting at Nha Trang with the following significant points: (a) General Dinh Van Minh desired a private conversation with Conceil; (b) General Tran That Dinh (Commanding General, III Corps) realized he had been duped by Dinh Government during his tenures as Military Governor of Saigon between 21 August and 16 September 1963; (c) General Dinh, during the month of September 1963, submitted a request to President Diem to accord them positions in different ministries which they did not expect Dinh to honor; (d) Dinh stated that the generals now have a plan; (e) prior to General Dinh’s press conference of 19 August, an unidentified Vietnamese civilian told Counsellor Ngo Minh Chao that the Americans were contacting various Vietnamese in order to encourage a coup. Dinh was called by Chao and shown a list prepared by Huu, naming Americans engaged in coup plotting; Conceil’s name was not on the list.

3 October
Ambassador Lodge approved Conceil’s meeting with General Dinh Van Minh

3 October
Conceil and General Dinh Van Minh met at Le Van Duyet Headquarters: (a) General Dinh requested to know USG position with respect to a change in the GVN in the near future; (b) Dinh did not expect USG support for himself or his colleagues for a coup d’etat, but did need USG assurances that USG would not attempt to thwart his plans; (c) Dinh stated need for continuation of American military and economic aid at the present level; (d) Dinh outlined three plans under consideration by the Generals: (1) to assassinate Ngo Minh Chao and Ngo Minh Chao, but to keep President Diem in office; (2) have military units go into insurrection against the GVN, evacuate and isolate Saigon; (3) direct military action against loyal military units in Saigon; (e) Dinh expressed some doubts as to the extent role played by General Truong Chinh Kien saying that a possibility exists that General 207935

Copy (of)
16 October

Ambassador Lodge instructs CIA not to initiate contact with General Minh or General Van, but if the General's initiate contact, such contacts were authorized; in the course of meetings with Van or Minh, assurances were to be given that the US will not thwart a change of government or deny economic or military assistance to a new regime if it appeared capable of increasing effectiveness of military effort, assuring popular support to win the war, and improving working relations with the United States.

12 October

Captain Nguyen Quang Nguyen, Chief of Operations, Army Command, stated he was contacted by two different coup groups during the week of 8-12 October; the second group was headed by Lt. Colonel Tran Ngoe Than, who claims he talked with Ambassador Lodge and Secretary Johnson who had indicated support when Captain Nguyen was convinced. Lt. Colonel Tho offered money; Nguyen is still undecided which group he will support.

13 October

Mr. Lan Ngoe Han, Manager of Caravelle Hotel and former ARVN officer who was retired due to suspicions of involvement in November 1968 coup plot, approached an embassy officer after a social event and stated he was trying to establish contact with a military officer designated by Ambassador Lodge to take part in confidential discussions. Han claimed he was representing some Vietnamese generals and other officers who wanted to talk to an American military officer about the situation in South Vietnam.

13 October

Counsel and Braun held meeting during which Braun confirmed the fact that he attempted to contact and had a message from the generals at 1:30 p.m. on 12 October by General Truong for Ambassador Lodge, one of the generals is supposed to have been the ambassador and the letter to which they referred was for Council. If the ambassador confirms that Council is speaking with the ambassador's approval.
It should be prepared for a future meeting outside Saigon; there was only passing communication and no further action.

26 Oct. Rhee General Minh and Non present special authorization to General Markevich, as well as other ARVN generals; though Ambassador killed with all generals, none mentioned General Non.

30 Oct. General Non requested Caison to meet him at JCS Headquarters; Non stated the general officers coup committee had decided to try to take advantage of the 26 October National Day in order to stage a coup within a week; a member of General Non’s staff, Colonel Nguyen Huy, had leaked to JCS that a coup was to occur on or about 27 October; Huy’s overtures to the Americans had reached the generals and as a result President Minh had ordered the 9th and 3th Divisions, which were key elements in the Saigon area for the coup, to go on extended operations outside Saigon; Non demanded to know the answer to previous questions with respect to the JCS attitude toward a coup; Caison, under instructions, told him that the JCS would not consider a change of government or that President’s military assistance to a new regime.

Non’s aides were increasing effectiveness of American efforts, ensuring popular support to win the war and improving working relations with the JCS; Non confirmed that he had attempted to contact Caison through Mr. Huy; Caison asked why the generals had not spoken to Ambassador Lodge at the 15 October reception; Non stated that security would not permit an approach to the Ambassador since other members of the JCS were present; Non pleaded he would seek permission of the coup committee to give Caison their political plan for the Ambassador’s visit and had requested a meeting in downtown Saigon on 24 October.

26 Oct. General Non’s aide requested Caison to be at the VIP lounge at Saigon Airport at 0630 hours; General Non told Caison that he had seen General Markevich at 830 Oct. and General Markevich had said to him that the JCS military would not thwart any plans of the generals; the aide of Caison that all plans were complete and had been planned and executed; the necessary military units were available and willing to join the coup; this was 207935.
would occur within the next week and in no case later than 2 November; Don requested a meeting that evening at a dentist's office in downtown Saigon.

24 October

A report was received at approximately 1230 hours that Lt. Colonel Phan Van Tho was planning a coup scheduled for 1300 hours; the coup failed to materialize. Later, Tho admitted that the coup forces lacked transportation, otherwise the coup would have begun as reported.

24 October

Cousin and Don met at 1330 hours; (a) Don did not receive permission from the coup committee to turn over the political plan; (b) Don had been authorized to outline the political thinking of the coup committee - (1) the succeeding government would be civilian and no member of the coup committee would hold a senior position in the new government; (2) the new government would, as soon as possible, release non-communist political prisoners, hold free elections, and permit operation of opposition political parties except for the Viet Cong; (3) there would be complete freedom of religion and no favoritism or discrimination shown toward any group; (4) the new government would be pro-West but not a pawn of the U.S.; (5) the new government would carry the war against the Viet Cong to a successful conclusion with Western, particularly U.S., help; (c) Don said that Cousin would be in close contact with coup headquarters to insure a close line of communication between the coup headquarters and the ambassador; (d) Don stated that once the coup started, it would do no good for the U.S. to attempt to stop it; (e) Don was aware of coup plotting on the part of Lt. Colonel Phan Van Tho; (f) the coup committee was in contact with Tho, but Tho does not have the necessary force to carry out his plan; (g) The generals' coup committee had come to the conclusion that the entire Ngo family had to be eliminated from the political scene in South Vietnam; (h) A new meeting was scheduled for 25 October.

25 October

General Don approached Ambassador Lodge at Da Nang Airport on the occasion of the departure of President Ngo and Ambassador Lodge for their return to Saigon and asked if Cousin was speaking for the ambassador; Ambassador Lodge replied in the affirmative.
24 October

Conrad and General Ren met at a restaurant's office in downtown Saigon at 1335 hours. (a) Ren confirmed that he had talked to Ambassador Lodge who had called for Conrad; (b) Ren stated that the generals' committee wished to avoid Americans' involvement in the coup and requested that other U.S. personnel stop talking to colonels and majors about any coup action; (c) Ren was informed that Ambassador Lodge was scheduled to depart Saigon on or about 31 October; (d) Ren was interested in the rumor that the ambassador intended to depart on 31 October, stating that he hoped the ambassador would not change his schedule as a change might be suspected by the GWU; (e) Ren stated that he was leaving on 29 October to coordinate final plans with General Vo Van Ze and General Phung; (f) Ren requested Conrad to remain at home from 30 October onward until further notice; (g) Ren questioned Ren regarding General Tran Thanh's participation in coup planning. Ren stated that Binh was not participating in the planning and that the coup committee sympathizers and General Binh continuously surrounded and had instructions to eliminate Binh if he showed any signs of cooperating with the coup; (h) Ren, although admitting that he was not participating in the actual planning of the coup, stated that from the meetings of the coup committee he knew of the following units: One-half of the Airborne Brigade, 3 Ranger Battalions of Marines, all of the Air Force with the exception of Colonel Phan Dinh Bien, the 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 12th Divisions, half of the 23rd Division, and elements of the 9th Division. (j) The Command Post for the coup would be Joint General Staff Headquarters.

1 November

Conrad was contacted by Captain Hoa, aide de camp to General Ren, at 2130 hours stating that Conrad was ordered immediately to General Staff Headquarters. Before leaving, he met within previous security arrangements for the past midnight. Conrad questioned Ren who said he was only carrying out instructions and stated that Conrad should come in.
III. PRE-COUP MEASURES BY COUP PRINCIPALS

A. It should be first stated that the initial conscious decision and agreement between the coup principals to stage a coup d'etat occurred sometime before 9 July 1963. The first decision to make this coup obvious was announced by Colonel Le Van Dinh on 9 July. The actual attempt, however, was never announced but was delayed to permit the situation to develop such that it would allow the generals concerned to take advantage of...
4. General Nguyen Van Thieu has been the indisputable leader of the coup principals from the outset. General Tran Van Quyet has been General Minh's deputy and principal officer to conduct military officers and unit commanders. Major General Nguyen Van Minh, probably the most intelligent of the conspirators, has been responsible for selling nationalist propaganda and for developing political planning. General Van Minh, in his role as the coup commander's aide, had played an active role in the actual planning. He was responsible for organizing the coup and for coordinating the coup plans with the various military units.

5. General Nguyen Van Thieu, Commander of the Central Corps, was the key figure in the coup planning. He had the support of Colonel Dinh Quoc, who had worked closely with General Minh. The coup planning was well organized, and all key figures were closely involved. The coup was planned to take place on the night of the 14th of May. The plan was carefully rehearsed, and all key figures were aware of their roles. The coup was to be carried out in a coordinated manner, with all key units and commanders participating in the operation.

6. The Saigon Garrison troops, including support troops such as engineers, medics, and support units, were contacted through individual commanders. Vietnamese Special Forces, because of their close ties with the secret police, were never contacted but were always considered by the conspirators as being completely loyal to President Diem. On the other hand, elements of the Presidential Guard had been contacted and were waiting for the signal to take action. The signal was given on the night of the 14th of May, and the Guard immediately took action. The coup was a complete success, with all key units and commanders participating in the operation.
of the commanding officer, Colonel Royal Fun Hiah, the medical
department in the coup, moved to the barracks.

The next day, several days before the coup, the new
medical director of the Vietnamese General Forces
was appointed to the Vietnam Special Forces with
its main duty being the medical director under control.
Unfortunately, the officer, a major (then) Hiah (Pham),
who had the mission to escort Captain Ho Van Thuong, Commanding
Officer of the Naval Forces, killed the Captain prior to 1200
hours. This nearly upset the timing of the plan. Fortunately,
he was given directly to the military hospital and no one knew
of his death except the coup principals and the warrant
loyal to them.

5. Several days before the coup was to take place, General
Don coordinated the final plan with General Ho Van Thuong
and Nguyen Lanh and with the Commanding Officer of the Military
Academy at Saigon. The signal to start the coup was based on a
previous memo issued by President Diem which stated that
after November there would be no excess and there would be
only a one-hour lunch period. By radio and telephone, the
coup participants had issued instructions to coup participants
that as of November working hours would begin at 1330.

Starting at 1330 hours 1 November the instructions were trans-
mitted to units for their own use. By noon, Hiah and in
sudden a time so that the forces which were to attack Saigon
would be in position at 1330 hours. One unit of the 7th Division
received its instructions to move at 1330 hours but actually
moved at 1315 hours. This also was the case of other units
which caused the coup to start earlier than expected.

6. There was a leak to the President prior to the actual
coup being launched. Because of this, the President ordered
the 41st Ranger Battalion to move into Saigon and to take the
FTR and to surround the palace. This caused another stumbling
block in the generals' plan. They were completely taken by
surprise by this maneuver and had to negotiate with the
commander of the battalion to withdraw his unit.

7. The method used by the generals to neutralize opposition
elements was to hold a luncheon meeting for all generals officers in the Saigon area (with
the exception of General Fun that Hiah) and all commanders of
department units. Only every one of these officers had appeared at General Staff headquarters and were seated
with
The exceptional case of Captain Nguyen who had been killed, General Dinh concluded that he and a group of officers were going to overthrow the government by force. At this time a section of militia, police officers with sub-machine guns, entered the row. General Dinh asked for these officers who were willing to go along with him to stand up. He told them they would be free to move around General Staff headquarters but were not to leave the command post. Those who did not join the coup were immediately placed under arrest and put under armed guard. Once the anti-coup members had been taken away, General Dinh ordered a tape recorder brought to the command post at which time he read the proclamation and objectives of the coup plotters which was recorded. He then asked each officer who had agreed to participate in the coup to speak his name into the tape recorder. Several tapes were made from the original and distributed to different parts of the city in pre-arranged hiding places so that in the event the coup failed, no officer could claim he had not voluntarily participated in the coup.

8. Once the coup had started, Colonel Khang of the Marine Brigade and Colonel Lien of the Civil Guard decided to join the coup. Colonel Lien at this time recorded instructions for the recorder which was to be later broadcast to all Civil Guard units ordering them to cooperate with the Generals' Revolutionary Committee. Lt. Colonel Khang, Commander of the Marine Brigade telephoned his unit commanders not then participating in the coup and ordered them to support the coup. The command of the Air Force was given to Colonel Ho Van Son of the General Staff. The command of the 7th Division was given to Colonel Nguyen Van Co. Temporary command of the IV Corps was given to Colonel Duong Xuan Suong. Command of troops in Saigon was given to General Tran Thanh Dinh. Under General Dinh's overall command were Saigon support troops, the Marine Brigade, the Airborne Brigade, 46 tanks from the Armor Command, the 8th and 7th Divisions, supported by the Air Force and the Thu Duc Officers' Training Base which joined the coup under the command of Colonel Le Van Son.

9. The background to General Dinh's joining the coup forces is particularly important. During the period between 31 August and the lifting of martial law on 16 September, General Dinh actually considered himself the hero of Vietnam and the Savior of the Dinh Regime. His actions during this period as Military Governor did not endear him to the population or the other officers. Dinh, on approximately 31 August, had the
...
which went to President Bien. These reports started on Oct.
Oct 24th. 8th and built up a picture of strong Viet Cong
forces approaching Saigon for election and prohibited the Joint
General Staff to issue appropriate orders, approved by the
President, to move units favorable to the conspiracy to the
outskirts of Saigon and also to move units, such as the
Special Forces, away from Saigon.

11. Thus, by the maneuvers described above, the generals
created the most favorable possible balance of forces in their
favor and by attacking during the night hour, insured the
least possible loss of life among the civilian population.

IV. AFTER-ACTION CHRONOLOGY OF BATTLE BETWEEN LOYAL AND
COMMUNIST FORCES

1 November

1230 Marines pour into Saigon from the direction of Bien Hoa;
later indicated to be from Quang Tri and Tien Sa areas.

1245 CAS notified that coup in progress.

Following have been seized by NLF:
Telecommunications Center, Ministry of Interior
Hoc Mon Yards
Directorate General of National Police HQ
Ministry of National Defense
Military Security Service HQ (blocked)

Palace surrounded. Presidential Guard barracks at Tan
Hung Boulevard seized; subsequently surrendered after
heavy battle.

Fighting in Vietnamese Special Forces area at Tan Son Nhut

Armored units moving through Saigon.

1250 Colonel Le Quang Tung captured; directed to order
Vietnamese Special Forces to cease fire; firing ceased
at 0035.

Fighting at palace; about 500 troops observed.

25 armored cars moving toward the palace.
1140 The generals are under arrest:
  Lieutenant Colonel Le Van Tung, VNAF Comander
  Colonel Nguyen Van San, Air Force Commander
  Colonel Ho Van Duyet, Airborne Brigade Commander
  Lieutenant Colonel Le Phuong Hung, Marine Brigade Commander
  Colonel Luong Ngoc Lang, Civil Guard Commander

Major Le Van Tuyen, Deputy Chief of Staff, VNAF, sought in absentia.

Captain Do Than, Commander of the Navy, called prematurely on the morning of 1 November.

The generals are unable to contact the palace by phone but promise that if Diem will resign immediately, they will guarantee safe departure to Diem and Minh; otherwise, the palace will be attacked by 1800 hours by the Air Force and Armor.

The following have taken asylum with Italian Ambassador Marcucci:
  Nguyen Dinh Thuan, Secretary of State at the Presidency
  Nguyen Luu, Minister of Finance
  Nguyen Thao Trang, Minister of National Economy.

Major General Do That Dinh was the key; when he agreed, the coup began.

French personnel are held aboard SS in Saigon River guarded by naval personnel.

1300 1200 truckloads of troops had crossed Bien Hoa bridge by then.

1500 Palace reduced I and II Corps and the 21st Division that a coup had been attempted in Saigon but that all the insurgents have been arrested.

1600 Heavy fighting, including armor, small arms, and possibly anti-aircraft in the vicinity of the palace.

1630 1530 in the palace vicinity.

1630 Fighting (1400-1600) ceased except for light toward the market in the palace area; heavy fire in vicinity of palace.

1700 Coastal fire from ships off Saigon Town.

Co: [Signature]

[Signature]

0793
Pro-western civilian politicians at JGS with generals will lead new civil government. No military personnel in new governement which should be established under civil control in one to three days. It is later reported that Vice President Nguyen Ngoc Thao and Lt. Col. Thach Thuy Quat are the only ones thus far selected for new government.

Radio VTH is under coup control; taped broadcast ready but the relay point had been blown.

The following generals are at JGS:

M/General Nguyen Van Vinh, Military Advisor to the President
M/General Tran Van Minh, Permanent Secretary General, KND.
R/General Tran Thien Khien, Chief of Staff, Joint General Staff.
R/General Le Van Kim, KND
M/General Nguyen Ngoc Le, Inspector, Self Defense Corps/Civil Guard
R/General Pham Van Chieu.

The following are claimed also to be supporting the coup:

R/General Nguyen Thanh, Commanding General, II Corps
M/General Lu Gao Tri, Commander, 1st Division.

Dien Hoa and Ky Tho under coup control.

Joint General Staff preparing heavy air bombardment for the following:

1830: Ha Tinh: All quiet. Local communists are meeting. Armored vehicle has guns trained on town at the airport.

Following units are supporting the coup:
1st Division, Lt. Colonel Huu Khan
6th Division, Colonel Nguyen Van Thieu
7th Division, Colonel Pham Minh
2nd Division, Colonel Le Quang Thong
4th Division, Lt. Colonel Nguyen Minh Tri
6th Division (但它 has been replaced)
1550 Minh told Tu that if he and Diem did not resign and turn themselves over to the coup forces within five minutes i.e., by 1350 hours, the palace would be bombed.

1650 Radio Saigon Military Revolutionary Council communique on taking over the government.

1700 Bonnig quits. Also Hieu, except two battalion of security guards and police on the road to Hu Lam.

1715 General Minh again telephoned Hieu but Hieu hung up on him;

1723 The Voice of the Vietnamese Armed Forces went off the air with no warning.

1745 The generals are interested in the release of Truong Tran Quang. They want him to join the government to provide assurance to Buddhist leaders.

1830 The VNAF forces are ready to take food to the troops.

1950 C-47 that had been circling Saigon and dropping leaflets signed by Huu Van Binh and announcing the overthrow of the government landed at Tan Son Nhut.

2020 B-26 circled Saigon and moved off toward Bien Hoa.

2110 Two U.S. jets, fully armed, still no progress on Tan Son Nhut.

2115 General Minh is trying to raise Colonel Di Huu Thong, commander of 9th Division, on several different phones. The call finally gets through.

Two mortal bullets were shot at this point...
Approximately one regiment of troops move out of NSC toward the palace.

Heavy mortar fire in the vicinity of the ZOB; probably NSC headquarters or Presidential Guard.

Heavy artillery. 105mm in Lima area, Saigon; possibly targeted on NSC headquarters.

Presidential Guard capitulates; coup forces moving on palace (this came from JCS and is somewhat unreliable).

Troops are moving on the palace and expect to take possession by 1900 hours, but are prepared for counter move. The generals hope for early recognition by the United States and other western powers. Civilian control to be complete within a week. When the coup is completed, presumably on the night of November 1, generals will come to the U.S. Embassy and ask Mr. Quang to join the new government, but will not force him.

Dien refused to capitulate and the palace will be blasted.

Ten truckloads of young Vietnamese heading down the highway; excited and proclaiming the revolution. 100 students liberated by coup forces and later on JCS; holding pro-coup demonstration. Four loud explosions heard in the vicinity of the palace.

Mr. Quang gives Dien another surrender chance; if he refuses, he will be blasted "off the face of the earth".

Mr. Quinh informed that Ambassador Lodge will receive the generals after the coup is over.

Mr. Truong: Leaflets proclaiming the new government and signed by General Minh are distributed; army and people seem to be happy; police headquarters and province chief residence are under military control.

Saigon: All quiet with increased security measures in the vicinity of the Big House and Saigon.

Curfew declared to be effective 2000 hours.

Many civilian politicians appearing at JCS.

General Minh orders artillery fire halted and our bombing plans tables to avoid the assault on the palace.
2140 General Cao announces his support of the coup.

Lt. Colonel Phan Ngoc Than, Strategic Military Inspector for Councillor Van, is brought to JCS by Military Police.

Military Police are rounding up civilian political leaders and bringing them to JCS for conference. Nguyen Van Thieu is chosen for president if he is still alive. He is not at JCS.

Airborne Brigade Commander, Colonel Vien, is allowed to speak to subordinate commanders via telephone. They announce their support of the coup. This caused Vien to break down and offer to turn his brigades to General Minh who said then would be needed to continue the fight against the Viet Cong and his loyalty to the Minh regime would not be held against him.

Troops moving to the palace area and covering the RTO insure that Minh and Thieu do not attempt to escape through a secret tunnel exit in the RTO area.

President Diem and others in the palace continue illegit.

One air assault on the Presidential Guard overnight to detain them. No order issued as General Minh has asked the president to conduct a conference on current events.
option at this point, but Minh prevailed. In the palace
is not completely occupied by Dan, additional air forces will
be launched.

2144 Windows in areas near the palace are blown out as small
arms fire from all directions in the palace and continued
toward the palace.

2145 Artillery fire on the Presidential Court building is
lifted; followed by napalm small arms fire into the coup
forces.

2200 Approximately 1,000 troops are moving toward the palace.

Danang and Hue: remain quiet. Physical security at Cam's
residence in Hue is increased. Several truckloads of troops are
seen in Hue; streets are empty.

2155 Additional battalion is deployed from the JGS toward the
palace.

B/General Do Co Tri, Commander, I Corps, publicly announces
support of the coup.

Indonesian Consul General informs Ambassador Lodge that the
Minister of Public Works, Nguyen Van Binh, sought asylum at
the home of the Indonesian Consul General.

2210 Approximately 17 tanks and 400 troops are moving out from
the palace grounds to engage 1,000 coup force troops.

2250 Demolition specialists and coup tanks are ordered to set
charges to blow up the palace.

2315 Two infantry battalions and fifteen M-113's, armed
personal carriers, arrive in Saigon from the to join
the palace attack under command of Lt. Colonel Pham.

2400 The following Ministers have resigned to the Joint General
Staff:

Nguyen Dinh Chau, Secretary of State at the
Presidency and Deputy Minister of Interior
Defence.

Nguyen Luong, Minister of Finance
Tran Le Quang, Agricultural Minister
Ho Kha Phong, National Security

207935
Colonel Than heading group designated to blow up the bridge. 21st hour. The Prime Grade which had joined the coup are some of the modern vessels from the US coming into three columns. They will move in on the other side of the river. The tanks are preceded by a jet, acting former Chief of Defence Province.

The generals are content of victory except for Le Van Kim, who is dealing with civilian politicians who are bickering over positions in the new government. Kim has decided that the new government will initially be a military junta with some civilian participation but with rapid turnover to civilians. Kim is preparing a proclamation for broadcast.

General Nhan is definitely in control and resolving all questions. The generals are trying to contact Minister of Education, Nguyen Quang Tri, but so far he has failed.

Vice President Nguyen Ngoc Tho also has not been located.

Gen. Thieu Khanh is acting as Nhan's Chief of Staff for operations, but Tran Van Vou is definitely the No. 2 in the generals' group. General Chieu is advising General Pantone and his following military operations closely, assisted by several competent colonels and majors.

The Italian Ambassador states that Ministers Thuan, Luong, and Thanh have reported to the USS by telephone in response to a radio appeal from the coup forces. They were not asked their location, but told they would be needed for a meeting on the morning of 2 November. Radio subsequently reported that they had checked in along with Minister Quang of Rural Affairs.

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0035 PM: CBS reports that troops are deployed throughout the city. Dien's mother's house is guarded by armed and regular police and secured by barbed wire. Radio has no reports on attacks by Tri to the people to respect cultural law. This is otherwise quiet.

0240 PM: There is to be a provisional government for 5 to 6 months. Later than there will be elections for President. The President in an absolute office. Chancellor of the state is named by this post in the provisional government. For military

Copy [illegible]
The objective of the provisional government will be the
successful prosecution of the war against the Viet Cong.

Prime Minister - Nguyen Van Tho (new Vice President)
Deputy Prime Ministers - Pham Van Quat and Tran Van Luyen
Minister for National Defence - G/General Tran Van Lan
Minister of Interior - N/G General Tran Quang
Minister of Information - B/General Huu Tho Giai (new
Director of Psychological Warfare)
Minister of Youth and National Education - N/G General
Tran Van Minh
Minister for Foreign Affairs - Hu Van Bao
Minister for Public Works - Trinh Le Hung (new
Agricultural Reform).

Others not selected.

Nguyen Van Tho has contacted JCS and is out.

General Minh is negotiating at the palace for the capitulation of the Nguyen Battalion and the President's Guard.

0310 Vice President Thao at JCS

Palace in under heavy attack

List of officers involved in the coup:

All general officers except Generals Th., Van Phu, Cao, Vuong Van Cao, Thinh Hoang.

Colonels: Le Van Thanh, Do An, Chief of Military Security Service
Nguyen Huu Co
Nguyen Van Chuan, J-4, JCS
Nguyen Van Huy, Chief of Staff for Infantry
Tran Van Huy
Vu Anh Mong, CO, 2nd Infantry Division
Doan Ngo Son, Director General, Civil Guard and Civil Defense Corps

Lt. Colonels: Le Nguyen Khang, Commander Marine
    Brigades
Do An Lai, Chief of Staff, Vietnam Air Force
Nguyen Ho Ky, CO, 2nd Transport Corps
Vinhuy Vietnamese Air Force

C.J. 207935
2330 Heavy attack on the palace, which was ordered by the President to be taken at any cost. All armored vehicles are drawn from the Embassy roof. Approximately one company of foot soldiers moving up for a final assault.

The President has accepted position as Prime Minister.

2330 President Diem called General Don at JCS with surrender offer. He said that he and his chief of staff moved to the airport and depart from there to an unspecified destination. The 29 children are not at the palace.

General Minh accepted President Diem's offer. Minh is attempting to arrange a ceremony at the palace where heavy firing is in progress.

The army forces have entered the palace. Principal fighting consists of tank duel.

Minh's policy toward the Presidential Guard and other units opposing the army forces is that they will be reinstated in going if there is a willingness to continue to fight against the Viet Cong.

2330 Diem called Don with an offer to surrender unconditionally; he said he had ordered the Presidential Guard to cease firing.

The generals will proceed to the palace to pick up Dien and Minh and escort them to JCS; they will request preference as to destination and seek approval of the country designated.

Prime Minister Thao has left JCS for his residence and will leave a spokesman later in the morning.

2300 Scattered gunfire in various sectors of the city. Ammunition expended in various parts of the palace grounds. Palace blank 30mm.

Presidential escort in front of palace, but neither Dien nor Thao has appeared.

وت has been declared a martial law throughout the city.

Copy of...
42d. Colonel Phuoc Minh said he was delighted to know that he could take total power without force.

43d. General Long has issued orders for the Civil Action Committee under Vice President Pham Van Dong. National Police Director Nguyen Van B€ng, and GOC Director Nguyen Van B€ng, all to yet

66th. General Hai Rau Nam is appointed Director General of National Police.

109b. Baş and Nhu are reported at JCS. This is unconfirmed. They are also rumors that Baş and Nhu have escaped.

110d. Operation small arms fire continues.

111b. President lodges charges against the Government.

112b. The coup is estimated as completed and successful.

113b. Lai and Nhu are estimated to be dead. Radio announces they committed suicide by poison. Bodies are reported to be at JCS.

114d. Colonel Phuoc Minh said that he and his forces entered Chinh Long Palace during the early morning hours to protect Baş and Nhu to the JCS after their surrender. A search revealed they were not on the palace and had not been there during the coup. They reported back to the JCS.

115b. Villas in Saigon and Cholon known to be used by the Ngu family were searched.

116b. Colonel Hai Rau Van led the detail which located genç and Nhu in a villa on Phuoc Long street in Cholon, Saigon, returned to the JCS with their bodies. Cause of death at this time is unknown.

117b. Lt. Nguyen Hope B€ng, Special Assistant to General Nguyen Chinh, stated: Saigon this 10th. He had viewed the palace of Chinh and Nhu at JCS. He said it was clear that something had been assassinated, possibly at Nhu's direction.

118b. Colonel Trinh and Mr. Kinh agreed that Baş and Nhu could have maintained communications from the Cholon which throughout the coup since 12th.
Palace to Thu Duc and from Thu Duc to the Cholon Mill.

General Minh and other officers at the Mill requested that Lt. G.O.M. and Maj. General Van Qua be sent from the White House to the palace to discuss the situation. The General and his staff were sent in the evening of 8 November by a bus in excess of 100,000 guardsmen. They reached the palace in the early morning hours, but no one was in the palace. The palace was taken over by the G.O.M. and General Van Qua. The palace was the site of the French and American missions and was being used as a temporary headquarters by the French.

Officer in J-2, JIC, reported that 4th and 8th Airports were under attack and that the French were being evacuated to a church in Cholon. Cholon. Captured with them was Captain Du Huy, a nephew of Thu Hau, JIC Chief.

1030 Armored personnel carriers surrounded Van's residence in Hau to prevent any further attacks.

2000 Crowd gathered at Tu Duc in Fun. Joyful participation in celebration on 3 November with the possible continuation of Van's residence.

V. CONCLUSION AND COMMENT

A variety of factors permitted the coup principals to execute a successful and relatively bloodless coup: in which the most significant of which are as follows:

(a) Knowledge of the coup planning was tightly held by both the Vietnamese and Americans. The coup principals sought out their American contact, an American officer whom most of them had known for many years. Their confidence in the officer was bolstered by an accreditation given both by Ambassador Lodge and General Mccarthy.

(b) The coup was not engineered by the usual process. It was by the Vietnamese themselves, and the Americans were not aware of it until after the coup. The coup was successful because of its simplicity, and the American involvement was minimal.

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The military execution of the coup and the military今后st by the subordinates is encountered throughout Pakistan although not unique. Not a single conspirator was arrested in either case, even though approximately 300 rounds of heavy artillery were expended in downtown Lahore, on the palace, and on the Presidential Guard barracks. The political aspects of the operations seem to have been less well resolved. Even during the height of battle, the generals were fighting with civilian politicians over the composition of the government. General Sheik Mujibur Rached has emerged as an effective leader, perhaps more capable of holding together the disparate elements of the Revolutionary Committee and the civilian following. Mr. Akbar, however, a reticent leader, particularly in the field of politics but has several times expressed his desire to return to politics. It is possible that he will appreciate the complexity of the problems that descended upon him after the coup and his previous single and even more political outlook will make him easy to tolerate him as a Pakistani leader. If he is, then the question remains: who will be his successor? The subsidy question is what new core group is forming now.