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JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM  
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EYES ONLY  
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FOR AMBASSADOR LODGE.

EYES ONLY

Re your 403.

Results your talk with Nhu promising on surface but we fear stalling tactics especially in light of CAS 0511 and CAS 0537. Thus, Nhu in Dalat would be some improvement, but he could still be power behind throne; Madame Nhu's tour could be plus for her local prestige unless she stays away a long time and takes a vacation rather than a speech-making ~~world~~ world tour (we would emphatically oppose her speaking in the US); dealings with Buddhists depend on concrete action not expression of intent; broadening of cabinet may or may not be real. In short, everything depends on there being real substance to Nhu's various proposals and change in GVN policies and actions. If Nhu is sincere in his desire reach accommodation rather than merely stalling, his initial offer may be subject to negotiation upward if we maintain momentum. Accordingly, we should start negotiations with optimum position, expecting that GVN and we might meet somewhere in between.

EYES ONLY

Drafted by: FE:RHilsman:mk 9/3/63  
Telegraphic transmission and classification approved by: FE - Roger Hilsman

Clearances: The Secretary (draft) DOD - Secretary McNamara (draft)  
White House - DOD/JCS - Gen. Taylor (draft)  
Mr. Forrestal (draft) S/S - Mr. Nobbe

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In this situation feeling here is that it is essential that central negotiations should be conducted directly with Diem and that you should proceed to a first meeting as soon as in your judgment you think it desirable. Bargain with Nhu would only confirm his ascendancy. We should be inclined to press for earliest such meeting. (Harkins should resume his routine military contacts, and, following your talk with Diem, should resume frequent contacts with Thuan and Diem on military matters to get on with war.)

You will have President's broadcast comments separately. You should emphasize to Diem that President has expressed his views because of his concern for the success of the war effort and his hope that the GVN will recognize the need for changes in their policy and improvements in their government.

Subject to these specific comments, the following is guidance for your first conversation with Diem.

(a) General Posture: We will continue to assert publicly and privately US discontent with repression which has eroded effort toward common goal of winning war until there are concrete results in GVN policies and posture. US not trying to overthrow government, but engaged in candid and critical talks to improve it. Purpose of general posture is to give you leverage with GVN; avoid false public impression US tried something and now backing off; and to avoid seeming to acquiesce in repression, which would put US on wrong side fence with majority of

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people inside Viet-Nam and the world.

(b) First Meeting with Diem: You should make points Deptel 294 re common interests in defeating Viet Cong; difficulty for US Government in maintaining support of American people in face daily juxtaposition US casualties and aid with repressive measures; and common problem, under time urgency, of working out set of GVN policies and actions that will make continued support possible.

Additional specifics are: release of remaining students and bonzes, including satisfactory guarantees safety of three bonzes now in US Embassy; removal of press censorship; restoration of damaged pagodas by the GVN; repeal of Decree 10; and honest negotiation between GVN and true Buddhist leadership on outstanding issues. You may assure Diem that if he takes appropriate action, USG will do all in its power to improve public opinion of GVN in the US.

GP-1.

End.

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