

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET~~

August 27, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE PRESIDENT

Vietnam

You will meet this afternoon at 4 p. m. with the principal officials concerned with our policies in South Vietnam, including Mr. Murrow and Ambassador Nolting.

Roger Hilsman and Bill Colby (CIA) will be prepared to report to you on the most recent developments. A committee of generals has been formed for the purpose of bringing about a military coup within a week. It is contemplated that the government would be formed after the coup, to be headed by Vice-President Tho, and will include some military officers in cabinet positions. The generals have asked for a token of U. S. good faith in the form of an innocuous message over the Voice of America.

We also have a report of parallel coup plans by certain civilian leaders. This group includes the labor leader, Tran Quoc Buu, and puts up General (Big) Minh as President.

The purpose of the meeting is largely to inform you of latest developments and progress in planning. Ambassador Nolting will be available.

You may wish to close the meeting by restating the present policy toward South Vietnam in something like the following terms:

- (a) The United States cannot support a government in South Vietnam which is dominated by Counselor Nhu.
- (b) While the United States would prefer to retain President Diem in office, we have serious doubts that it can effectively be done. We should leave to the Vietnamese military leaders the decision whether Diem can be preserved.

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(c) The fundamental objective of the United States in South Vietnam has not changed: it will continue to give wholehearted support to the prosecution of the war against the Viet Cong terrorists, and will continue assistance to any government in South Vietnam which shows itself capable of sustaining this effort.

You may wish to emphasize the great importance of highly coordinated collective action by the government officials and agencies involved here in Washington.

At the moment coordination is being carried on through Roger Hilsman's office.

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