

VIETNAM, WHITE HOUSE

Memorandum of Conversation

BOX NO. 4/6

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DATE: August 28, 1963  
6:00 p. m.

SUBJECT: Viet-Nam

White House  
PARTICIPANTS: The President  
McGeorge Bundy  
Mr. Forrestal

Defense Department  
Secretary of Defense McNamara  
Deputy Secretary Gilpatric  
Gen. Maxwell Taylor  
Major Gen. Victor Krulak

State Department  
COPIES TO: Secretary of State  
Governor Harriman  
Assistant Secretary Hilsman  
Ambassador Nolting

CIA  
General Carter, Deputy Director  
Richard Helms, Deputy Director  
for Plans

Justice: Attorney General Kennedy USIA: Mr. Edward Murrow  
Treasury: Secretary Dillon The Vice President

The meeting was delayed because of the preceding civil rights meeting. The President asked the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense, Mac Bundy and General Talyor to meet with him privately in another room.

Upon their return the President announced that three messages would be sent to Saigon--one from General Taylor to General Harkins asking him for his personal assessment of the situation and the plans of the generals; The second is a personal message from the President to Lodge saying that the President wanted to be assured that there was full coordination between Saigon and Washington; that he wanted Ambassador Lodge's personal and frank assessment; that he wanted to avoid any situation in which the field was going ahead on a plan that was against their better judgment because they thought it was orders from Washington and that Washington was issuing instructions on the false assumption that the field agreed; the third cable is the general cable drafted by McNamara, Harriman, Bundy, Forrestal and Hilsman following this morning's meeting.

The meeting broke up with Mr. Harriman's saying, "Mr. President, I was very puzzled by the cable from General Harkins until I read the outgoing from General Taylor." (The President had some difficulty containing himself until everyone had left the room, whereupon he burst into laughter and said, "Averell Harriman is one sharp cookie."

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