

049
8 October 1963 DRAFT

At your Wednesday press conference you will undoubtedly be questioned about CIA's role in South Viet Nam. This as you know has been the subject of countless erroneous and misleading news articles and editorials, the most violent of which have been introduced into the Congressional Record with equally violent speeches condemning CIA as "irresponsible", and winding up with a demand for a Joint Watchdog Committee.

The principal accusations are:

1. CIA makes policy independent of State Department.
2. CIA's estimates and reports on South Viet Nam have been erroneous and many have been willfully withheld from our Ambassador and from U.S. policy makers.
3. CIA has undertaken activities beyond its area of competence, in secrecy and in contradiction of the desires of the Ambassador.
4. CIA is in violent disagreement with the Embassy, the military and other United States agencies in South Viet Nam.

As you know the facts contradict these and a variety of other equally irresponsible statements made in the press or on the Floor of the Congress, the details of which I will not burden you with.

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6	
116-92-219	
By: <u>[Signature]</u>	NARA, Date: <u>1/14/97</u>

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The facts are:

1. CIA does not make policy nor do we express ourselves on policy except to the extent that I do personally as a member of your Executive Committee.

2. CIA estimates and reports on South Viet Nam have been consistently correct. They have reflected the autocratic character of the Diem regime for the past 9 years. They have reflected the tarnishing of the regime's image in the eyes of the people of South Viet Nam and in world opinion for the past 18 months. They have reported on countless coup d'etat rumors and evaluated them as improbable of coming off because of a lack of unanimity among the military. They have reported favorable progress in the war, at the same time pointing out trouble spots such as the Delta.

In fact CIA's reporting supports the logic of your decisions reached following the McNamara-Taylor mission. I might add that ^{19 spaces} [REDACTED] who has been under such criticism recently has in my opinion been consistently right in his observations.

John Richardson (16 spaces)

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3. CIA has undertaken no activities of any nature which have not been approved by the Ambassador and agreed to by the Country Team. Moreover CIA's activities, together with those of the military, USOM, AID, USIA, etc., are held under review by the Southeast Asian Task Force and the special Interdepartmental Counter Insurgency Group, hence there seems no foundation for the allegations that CIA operates without control.

4. Prior to about the first of September there had been no reports of conflicts between the CIA station in Saigon and the Embassy, the military or other agencies. Quite to the contrary, reports of a proper working relationship have been received by me from the Ambassador, from the innumerable missions which have gone to South Viet Nam, i. e. General Wheeler, Gen. Krulak, Mr. Forrestal, Adm. Felt and, indeed, my own observations on my visit there. Additionally a senior CIA officer and our Saigon Station Chief have attended every one of Secretary McNamara's Honolulu meetings and at those meetings the station's activities have been reviewed and approved subject to modifications agreed to at the meeting.

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There is no doubt that the criticism which has found its way into hundreds of news articles and editorials is seriously eroding the spirit of this organization which I have now spent two years trying to rekindle. I suggest in view of this it might be timely for you to put the entire matter in focus at your press conference and, if you do so, I believe the problem will disappear.

JAM/mfb