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23 March 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Walt W. Rostow
Special Assistant to the President

SUBJECT : Transmittal of Working Notes

1. Per your request I have transcribed the rough notes I took at the 20 March joint US-Vietnamese session and the 21 March US-only session of the Guam Conference. Since you asked for as complete an account as I could reconstruct, I have fleshed these notes out somewhat from memory, but only where I am positive my memory is accurate.

2. Mr. Helms and I agreed prior to the conference sessions that I would jot down notes on matters of direct or indirect Agency interest so we would be in a position to guide Agency programs to support the President's policies or follow up on any topics on which the Agency could make a contribution. It was never our intent to make a transcript and in making these notes I had no thought of endeavoring to use them in an attempt to reconstruct the full proceedings of the two sessions in question. Thus, while I did of course try to be accurate, I made no effort to be comprehensive. Consequently, though to the best of my belief the attached resumes are accurate, neither one pretends to be complete.

3. In the interests of speed and legibility, I had the corrected version of the transcript I dictated put on mats. Only three copies were made, however, and the mats were then all destroyed. Thus there are only three

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copies of this document now in existence. One is the attached copy for you. The second, at your request, is being sent to Mr. Read with a copy of this covering memorandum. The third is in my personal safe to be seen by no one save me and Mr. Helms.

G. A. Carver, Jr.

George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

One Copy Only to: Mr. Benjamin Read
Executive Secretary
Department of State

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Working Notes on First Day's Session
of Guam Conference

TIME : 1500-1730, 20 March 1967

PLACE : Conference Room, COMNAV/Marianas
Headquarters Building

PARTICIPANTS: See attached lists

THE PRESIDENT opened the session by welcoming the Vietnamese delegation and noting that one of the main objectives of the conference was to provide him with the opportunity to introduce to the Vietnamese representatives the new American team which would soon be taking over in Vietnam. He then introduced Ambassador Bunker, Ambassador Locke, and Mr. Robert Komer. During the course of these introductory remarks, THE PRESIDENT expressed high praise for Ambassador Lodge and the work he had done in Vietnam. THE PRESIDENT then stressed the importance of the constitutional process now in train in Vietnam and the drafting work of the Constituent Assembly. He also underlined the importance of the task of preparing for and holding elections which would give SVN a truly democratic government with a popular base. This stress on the constitutional and electoral process of nation-building set the tone and theme for the entire session.

General Thieu (Chairman of the National Leadership Council and South Vietnam's present Chief of State) opened the Vietnamese presentation. He thanked President Johnson warmly for the latter's initial remarks and his support for the cause of Vietnamese independence. General Thieu added that the trend of the war was now running in our favor. The enemy, frustrated in the military field, was shifting his emphasis to the political front. Gen. Thieu felt that in the military area stronger pressure ought to be put on North Vietnam in order to persuade the Hanoi regime to cease its aggression in South Vietnam. Gen. Thieu then turned to

the substantial results and progress that had been achieved in Vietnam since the Honolulu conference, noting that his remarks would be general and that Prime Minister Ky would provide amplifying details. He called attention to the Constituent Assembly elections held in September 1966 and to the work of that assembly as tangible proof of the kind of progress that had been made. He said the drafting of the constitution had been completed and the constitution would be promulgated within a few weeks. He noted that elections for village and hamlet councils would be held next month (i.e., April), promised that SVN would have a popularly elected government by the fall of 1967, and that "by the end of this year" would be well on the road to constitutional democracy. Gen. Thieu then asked his prime minister, Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky, to make a detailed report on the present situation and progress in South Vietnam.

General Ky also expressed his personal pleasure and that of his government at the opportunity to confer with the President of the United States and the President's advisers on the situation in Vietnam. The full text of Ky's remarks is separately available and hence those remarks will not be recapitulated in detail here. Ky spoke of national reconciliation, of Revolutionary Development and constitutional progress, proudly waving a copy of the final draft of the new constitution handed him a few hours before he boarded the plane for Guam. He said that document was "now as good as the law of the land." The theme and principal thrust of Ky's presentation is summarized in his statement, "We are going to do everything possible to make our nation whole again. We are striving to provide an atmosphere in which all our citizens can have respect for himself, his fellow citizen, and his government and its institutions." Taken in context, his comments about the Front (no coalition) and the need to keep pressure on Hanoi contained nothing a potential Vietnamese presidential candidate would not have had to say. They did not--as the press inaccurately reported--strike a jarring note out of harmony with American views. Ky concluded by paying tribute to

the American soldier and by welcoming Ambassador Bunker, Ambassador Locke, and Mr. Komer to Vietnam.

THE PRESIDENT thanked Chairman Thieu and Prime Minister Ky for their fine presentation of the situation in Vietnam and the progress being made there. He welcomed the Vietnamese achievements both in the military field and, particularly, in the field of nation-building. He stressed strongly the US Government's desire to see the pacification effort intensified. THE PRESIDENT also stressed the need for close military and civilian coordination--both US and Vietnamese-- in this all-important pacification effort.

General Cao Van Vien (GVN Minister of National Defense) then gave a briefing on the military situation in South Vietnam. He noted that the Communists were under increased pressure and were suffering battlefield defeats. The Viet Cong, he observed, were trying desperately to regain stature by local initiatives such as the attack made on 15 February in Quang Ngai Province. The Viet Cong were also steadily increasing their use of rockets, mortars, and recoilless rifles in an effort to inflict psychologically impressive damage on Vietnamese and allied forces. General Vien observed that over the ensuing weeks and months the Viet Cong (VC) will probably adopt a three-fold strategy involving:

(1) Increased attacks on Vietnamese and allied base camps and installations in order to increase GVN and allied commitments of troops to static defense duties.

(2) Increased attacks on Revolutionary Development teams because the Communists feel it essential to thwart these teams' effectiveness.

(3) Increased attacks on district and provincial headquarters in order to terrorize local Vietnamese leaders, generate political pressure, and thwart South Vietnamese political development.

General Vien then presented a detailed view of current Republic of Vietnam and Free World armed forces' actions.

Following this, General Vien discussed the Vietnamese Army's wholehearted commitment to the support of the Revolutionary Development (RD) program, emphasizing that the GVN's military leaders completely understood this essential task. General Vien observed that the increasing level of attacks on RD teams proved that the RD effort was hurting the Communist cause and driving the VC to desperate measures.

General Vien stated that the primary mission of the Vietnamese and allied armed forces was three-fold:

- (1) To defeat the enemy's military force
- (2) To surge ahead in Revolutionary Development
- (3) To halt infiltration and the movement of men and supplies from North Vietnam to South Vietnam.

General Vien concluded his remarks with some specific comments on the infiltration problem, observing that the Communists could never be defeated so long as they were able to bring a continuing flow of supplies and manpower into the South. He noted that South Vietnam had a 935-mile border with Cambodia and Laos, a border that was ill-defined and impossible to make secure against infiltration. In order to stop this infiltration, the GVN had a specific proposal they wished to offer for American consideration, namely, that of placing forces along the alignment of Route 9 from the Vietnamese border to the Mekong River. The GVN was not proposing a Maginot Line, but, instead, a series of interlocking strong points created by an aggressive deployment of ground troops. The GVN recognized the political difficulties involved in this proposal and the problem it would create in regard to the 1962 Geneva agreement in Laos. Nevertheless,

the GVN felt that it was a practical plan and noted that the Communists' use of Laotian territory itself constituted a complete violation of the 1962 agreements, and hence, an act of naked aggression which the Communists' opponents were perfectly justified in countering.*

THE PRESIDENT thanked General Vien for his review of the military situation and asked General Westmoreland if the latter had any additional comments to make.**

General Westmoreland added that the Communist enemy unquestionably had increasing problems. There was no evidence that the enemy's strategy was changing but his tactics were modified from time to time. His losses had doubled during the course of the preceding year. The enemy now had 54 maneuver battalions but only half of these were fully combat effective. Vietnamese and allied progress was obvious and was supported by much tangible evidence. For example, 18 percent more of SVN's road net was now open to daily traffic. Out of the entire ARVN, US advisers rate only seven battalions as not being fully combat effective at this time, and General Westmoreland was assured that this number would be reduced to zero in the near future. There was a steady and noticeable improvement in South Vietnamese combat leadership and performance. General Westmoreland also observed that there was a steady improvement

*Subsequent press comment indicated that General Vien was talking in terms of a five-division force, but my notes make no reference to specific numbers of troops and to the best of my recollection no mention of numbers was actually made in this context at the 20 March Joint Session.

**Both my notes and my memory indicate that the Vietnamese Route 9 proposal was not mentioned or discussed by any American speaker at the 20 March Joint Session.

in the pacification situation, particularly in the area immediately around Saigon. There was, in short, much to be encouraged about. What was most needed now was still better positive work on our side coupled with even more pressure on the enemy.

THE PRESIDENT took up the theme of national reconciliation and the Vietnamese Government's program in this all-important sphere. He expressed his gratification at the fact that our Vietnamese allies manifestly felt the same urgency on this matter as did we.

THE PRESIDENT congratulated Chairman Thieu and Prime Minister Ky on Vietnam's constitution and its successful completion. He expressed his personal appreciation at the sense of urgency obviously felt by Chairman Thieu and Prime Minister Ky with regard to constitutional development.

THE PRESIDENT also welcomed the account of South Vietnam's progress toward elections. There followed an exchange of comments during which Ky again promised to move forward on elections with all possible speed, saying that he hoped the presidential and senatorial elections could be held by mid-August. THE PRESIDENT noted that his birthday was on August 27 and said he could ask for no finer birthday present than an elected president and senate in Vietnam.

THE PRESIDENT, again referring by name to the members of his new team, assured the Vietnamese delegation that the best men available in our country would be sent to help the Vietnamese people in their task of building a free nation. He also assured the Vietnamese that General Westmoreland would be given whatever he needed, wanted, and could use in the task of defeating the Communist enemy. The very best men who wore the uniform of the United States would be sent to Vietnam to help the Vietnamese defend their freedom.

THE PRESIDENT noted how fine it was to watch a democracy being built and how anxious the United States was to assist in this exciting task. THE PRESIDENT stressed the need for stability,

complimenting the present Vietnamese leaders on the amount of stability they had brought to Vietnam during their period of trusteeship. He observed jovially that "you seem to be doing a better job of maintaining unity than I am," and used this well-received jest as a means for underlining the paramount importance of the Vietnamese military establishment's remaining unified.

THE PRESIDENT then again praised the work of Ambassador Lodge in helping the Vietnamese along their road to political democracy. He commented that he was going to ask Ambassador Lodge to become his ambassador-at-large so that the Ambassador could explain to the American people the fine things the Vietnamese were doing and so that his counsel would continue to be available.

THE PRESIDENT then turned to the subject of long-term planning, noting that since victory was on the way despite present difficulties, it was urgently important to begin now to make plans for the future. He invited Dr. Lilienthal to speak on what was being done in the post-war planning field.

Dr. Lilienthal stressed the importance of the task. He briefly reviewed the ideas and plans he has blocked out in concert with his Vietnamese colleagues, particularly his counterpart Dr. Vu Quoc Thuc (The GVN's Director of Post-War Planning).

Vu Quoc Thuc replied to Dr. Lilienthal's remarks on behalf of the Vietnamese delegation. He praised Dr. Lilienthal highly and, on behalf of the Vietnamese people and government, thanked The President for making Dr. Lilienthal's assistance available. He noted that he and Dr. Lilienthal had very similar views, which made working together a pleasure. Dr. Thuc explained it was difficult to do post-war planning when one did not know for sure whether to plan in terms of an isolated South Vietnam sealed off from the North or in terms of at least a limited amount of trade and commerce with South Vietnam's northern neighbor. He assured the President that the Vietnamese were working hard to develop responsible programs capable of meeting the needs of the post-war future.

THE PRESIDENT then took up the subject of inflation and the critical need for land reform.

Mr. Komer called attention to the economic agreements recently concluded with the GVN, which would help in the anti-inflation field.

Mr. Phan (Governor of the National Bank and recently named Minister of Economy and Finance) replied to Mr. Komer's remarks and assured the President of the GVN's continued cooperation in the all-important field.*

Prime Minister Ky assured the President that the GVN was well aware of the importance of land reform and of pressing further in this area as rapidly as possible. He noted that there were a number of complicated administrative problems, including the fact that Vietnamese law required detailed surveys before titles could be issued and in many areas security considerations precluded making the kind of survey the law requires. He said he had decided to cut through the red tape in this sphere and accept certification by hamlet and village councils that peasants owned given plots of land.

Chairman Thieu closed the session by reassuring the President and his colleagues, including General Westmoreland, that the Vietnamese would concentrate on both the military and the civilian side of the conflict and had every confidence in making continued progress. In these closing remarks, Chairman Thieu referred once more to the Route 9 proposal.

* * * * *



Cautionary Comment: The above resumé of the 20 March Joint Session was based on rough notes I scribbled while the session was in progress, amplified by memory whenever I was certain my memory was accurate. These notes were made solely for my use and that of Mr. Helms in refreshing our memories on the topics covered so we could see how the Agency could best deploy its resources in order to support the President's programs. Though the above resumé is accurate to the best of my recollection and belief, it is not complete. In taking these notes, I never intended for them to be used in an attempt to reconstruct the entire proceedings.

George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

JOINT CONFERENCE SESSION
MONDAY, MARCH 20
AMERICAN PARTICIPANTS

AT THE TABLE

1. THE PRESIDENT
2. SECRETARY RUSK
3. SECRETARY MCNAMARA
4. GENERAL WHEELER
5. AMBASSADOR LODGE
6. AMBASSADOR BUNKER
7. GENERAL WESTMORELAND
8. GOVERNOR HARRIMAN
9. ADMIRAL SHARP
10. MR. GAUD

BEHIND THE TABLE

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. MR. LILIENTHAL | 14. COLONEL GINSBURGH |
| 2. MR. UNGER | 15. GENERAL HUMPHREYS |
| 3. MR. HELMS | 16. MR. MCGOWAN |
| 4. AMBASSADOR LOCKE | 17. MR. CALHOUN |
| 5. MR. HABIB | 18. GENERAL MOMYER |
| 6. MR. ROSTOW | 19. MR. READ |
| 7. MR. KOMER | 20. MR. CARVER |
| 8. GENERAL TAYLOR | 21. MR. JORDEN |
| 9. MR. MCNAUGHTON | 22. MR. JONES |
| 10. MR. ZORTHIAN | 23. MR. MCPHERSON |
| 11. MR. LATHRAM | 24. MR. JACOBSEN |
| 12. MR. MACDONALD | 25. GENERAL BROWN |
| 13. MR. CHRISTIAN | 26. LT COLONEL MONTAGUE |

Others to be available on call outside the conference room.

JOINT CONFERENCE SESSION
MONDAY, MARCH 20
VIETNAMESE PARTICIPANTS

AT THE TABLE

1. MAJOR GENERAL NGUYEN VAN THIEU, CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL
2. AIR VICE MARSHAL NGUYEN CAO KY, CHAIRMAN, CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
3. LT GENERAL CAO VAN VIEN, MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE
4. H. E. M. TRAN VAN DO, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
5. BRIG GENERAL NGUYEN BAO TRI, MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND OPEN ARMS
6. BRIG GENERAL NGUYEN DUC THANG, MINISTER OF REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT
7. H. E. M. NGUYEN HUU HANH, MINISTER OF ECONOMY AND FINANCE
8. AMBASSADOR BUI DIEM
9. MR. VU QUOC THUC, DIRECTOR OF POST-WAR PLANNING
10. MR. NGUYEN NGOC LINH, GENERAL DIRECTOR VIETNAM PRESS

In the event two members of the Constituent Assembly are included in the Vietnamese party, they would replace Thuc and Linh at the table. Linh and Thuc would then be seated in the chairs behind the table.

BEHIND THE TABLE

1. LE QUANG GIAN, CHIEF OF CABINET, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
2. MAJOR NGUYEN QUOC QUYNH, G-3, JOINT GENERAL STAFF
3. LT COL PHAN VAN MINH, CHIEF, CABINET, PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
4. NGUYEN PHU DUC, DIRECTOR OF PROTOCOL, LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE
5. MAJOR LE NGOC DAU, GENERAL THIEU'S AIDE
6. CAPTAIN NGHIEM XUAN LANH, PREMIERE KY'S AIDE
7. CAPTAIN LAIN DUY HAU, GENERAL TRI'S AIDE
8. GENERAL THANG'S AIDE
9. LT QUACH TINH CAN, VIEN'S AIDE

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~SENSITIVE~~

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Working Notes on US Delegation Session
of Guam Conference

TIME : 1030-1415, 21 March 1967

PLACE : Conference Room, COMNAV/Marianas
Headquarters Building

PARTICIPANTS: US Delegation only. All US officials
attending the joint session were there,
plus some others whose names I did not
record.

THE PRESIDENT opened the meeting by giving a brief
resumé of the 20 March joint session. "Yester-
day," he observed, we had heard the Vietnamese
report on their efforts and progress. "Today,"
we would take stock of our own efforts. THE
PRESIDENT then asked General Westmoreland to give
a report on the US military effort.

General Westmoreland opened by noting that 70 percent
of South Vietnam was covered by jungle or by marsh-
land. Eighty percent of the South Vietnamese
people lived on 40 percent of the country's ter-
ritory, and 40 percent of the country's territory
was virtually unpopulated. All of this meant the
guerrilla enemy had many places to hide and was
able to operate in a terrain environment advanta-
geous to him.

General Westmoreland also noted that the eastern
part of Laos, particularly the eastern part of the
so-called "panhandle," was de facto North Vietnamese
territory through which Hanoi could move troops
and supplies at will. By land through Laos and
across the so-called demilitarized zone, which
was no longer demilitarized, and by sea along the
coast, Hanoi was infiltrating men into the South
at a rate of about 7,000 a month.

The Vietnamese-Cambodian border, undefended and
ill-defined in many places, provided the Communists
with other advantages, including ready availability
of secure sanctuary from which they could sally
forth to harass our forces.

~~SENSITIVE~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

Hanoi, despite the Communists' mounting problems, is still confident of victory, still confident that the Communists can wear down the Free World's will to continue the fight.

General Westmoreland then sketched the Communists' over-all command structure, noting that operational control of Communist military activity in South Vietnam's two northernmost provinces (Quang Tri and Thua Thien) was exercised directly from North Vietnam's Military Region IV headquarters in Vinh, North Vietnam.*

General Westmoreland reviewed the many problems facing Free World forces including that of operational security. He noted that the enemy has infiltrated South Vietnamese ranks on both the military and civilian side to such an extent that it is difficult to keep the Communists unaware of any operational planning or information passed to our Vietnamese allies.

General Westmoreland stressed that the enemy's target was not terrain but people, and that he had the bulk of his forces concentrated in South Vietnam's populated areas.

General Westmoreland then reviewed the enemy's order of battle and present troop deposition, and the deposition of allied forces made to counter various Communist threats. He noted that the enemy presently had an eleven division force and estimated that the Communists were striving to achieve a twelve division force structure.**

*General Westmoreland actually said Military Region III, but this was a slip of the tongue.

**General Wheeler (with whom I rode back from Guam) and I both feel that the eleven division figure was another unintentional slip of the tongue. Both MACV and the Washington intelligence community presently credit the Communists with nine headquarters complexes in or near South Vietnam capable of controlling division-sized operations.

In his review of Communist troop depositions, General Westmoreland noted that the Communists had seventy-seven base areas in South Vietnam, three in Cambodia, and seven in Laos. The Laotian bases are marginally accessible by ground operations and could be struck by air. The Cambodian bases are not accessible because of political considerations. Several times during his presentation, General Westmoreland directed attention to the fact that two Communist divisions are presently located in Cambodia in secure sanctuary from which they could sally forth and from where they pose a constant threat against which we have to deploy.

General Westmoreland explained the importance of these base areas in Communist strategy and the success Free World forces have had in base clearing operations. He also pointed out the complexity and difficulty of such operations, noting Communist mastery of camouflage and concealment practices, and the extensive use the Communists made of well-hidden tunnel complexes. By way of illustration, he noted that in Operation JUNCTION CITY (which is presently in train) we have run across what was obviously the headquarters of a major COSVN propaganda unit located in a tunnel. This particular tunnel complex included rooms at least half the size of that in which the Guam conference was being held. In one such room, US forces had recently discovered a complete underground broadcasting station.

General Westmoreland then made a corps by corps review of the current situation. He stated we were making progress in the Mekong delta. There are 91 districts in the delta (i.e., in IV Corps); we were making progress in 45, standing still in 42, and losing ground in four (one district in Kien Hoa Province, one in Vinh Binh and two in Sa Dec). There were three South Vietnamese Army divisions in the delta, two of which (the 21st and the 7th) were very good and--by Vietnamese standards--well led.

The III Corps region is the heartland of South Vietnam and is consequently the area where General Westmoreland had placed the greatest concentration

of US troops. There were serious problems in III Corps, an area in which the enemy had also concentrated great efforts. The three South Vietnamese divisions located in that corps were the poorest in the South Vietnamese Army. To bolster Vietnamese efforts, General Westmoreland was deploying US troops in Gia Dinh and Long An provinces to protect Saigon and to improve security in the immediate vicinity of the capital. General Westmoreland said he was also placing US troops (elements of the 9th Division) in Dinh Tuong Province, where their initial efforts had been both good and effective.*

To meet the Communist threat, new tactics were constantly being devised. For example, General Westmoreland planned to use a "floating brigade" in the Communist stronghold of War Zone C. This brigade would be supplied by parachutes and helicopters, and would keep constantly on the move to harass the Communists and deny them the use of this key base area.

General Westmoreland then reviewed II Corps and his problems in keeping an adequate screen to protect against incursions by the Communist forces presently located in Cambodia.

General Westmoreland used Quang Ngai Province as a concrete illustration of the problems in I Corps. He cited an example of the damage caused by four Communist regiments located in that area, and explained how it could take a full allied division operating in that area for a year to clean it out.

After his detailed review of the situation, General Westmoreland summarized the over-all picture, noting progress and achievement but making the point that unless military pressure causes the

*Dinh Tuong is actually in IV Corps, but General Westmoreland discussed it in the context of his III Corps operations intended to protect the southern approaches to Saigon.

Viet Cong to crumble and Hanoi to stop its support of southern insurgency, the war in Vietnam could go on indefinitely.

THE PRESIDENT asked General Westmoreland whether he thought the Communists accurately reported their own defeats and losses and hence whether Hanoi had a true picture of the situation in South Vietnam.

General Westmoreland replied that in their reports up the chain of command, the Communists greatly exaggerated their successes and the casualties they inflicted on allied forces.*

Returning to the subject of infiltration, General Westmoreland called attention again to the importance of Communist movement through Laos and suggested the outlines of a plan that would involve recruiting and training tribal elements native to that area (Khas) as forces that could operate in the area and interdict Communist infiltrators.

THE PRESIDENT then initiated a brief discussion of bombing pauses and asked General Westmoreland's opinion about their consequences. General Westmoreland wholeheartedly supported the political wisdom of the pauses ordered to date, but explained the advantage the Communists took of any suspension in the allied aerial interdiction campaign. After some gentle, skillful questioning by the President, General Westmoreland did admit that he hoped these pauses would not become a habit.

THE PRESIDENT thanked General Westmoreland for his fine survey and asked Admiral Sharp to give a report on the aerial campaign against North Vietnam.

*My notes are sketchy here by I believe the point General Westmoreland was making was that the Communists report their own losses with reasonable accuracy but greatly inflate their claims of damage inflicted on allied forces, thus presenting a distorted view of the situation.

Admiral Sharp made a brief summary review during which he noted his belief that our bombing campaign had been successful in light of its limited objectives. It had not stopped infiltration, but no one had ever thought it would. It had made Communist infiltration immensely more difficult and costly for the Communists and also exerted a constant pressure on the North Vietnamese regime.

Admiral Sharp then asked two of his aides (Marine Corps Brigadier General Hutchinson and a Navy commander whose name I did not catch) to present detailed briefings on CINCPAC operational proposals with respect to aerial bombardment and mining operations.

General Hutchinson outlined an extension of the ROLLING THUNDER operation involving six target systems in North Vietnam:

- (1) transportation
- (2) military complexes
- (3) petroleum storage and distribution facilities
- (4) war supporting industries
- (5) electrical power
- (6) port complexes at Haiphong, Hon Gay, and Cam Pha

(Because of the sensitivity of the subject matter I specifically did not take detailed notes on the projected targets. The JCS can almost certainly provide copies of the briefing folders handed the President, Secretary McNamara, and Secretary Rusk. I do recall that the total proposal was presented in the context of an April-October 1967 time frame, involved seven target packages, and a total of 59 targets. It was estimated that the execution of this program would entail 1,715 civilian casualties in the DRV and the loss of 82 US aircraft.)

General Hutchinson then outlined the MIG threat in North Vietnam, the general problems caused by North Vietnamese air defense capabilities and a

proposal to cope with these threats. (Again, because of the sensitivity of the subject and its lack of relevance to CIA programs, I specifically did not take detailed notes.)

The Navy Commander then reviewed mining operations which have already been executed and offered a plan for mining the harbors of Haiphong, Hon Gay and Cam Pha. (Once more, I specifically avoided taking detailed notes on this sensitive topic which involved matters outside of CIA's concern.)

THE PRESIDENT then turned to Ambassador Lodge for a report on civil activities in Vietnam, particularly in the field of nation-building and pacification.

Ambassador Lodge observed that because of the lateness of the hour he would discuss only the topic of elections and then ask two of his colleagues (Mr. MacDonald and General Humphreys) for short briefings on the important topics of land reform and civilian casualties.

Ambassador Lodge briefly reviewed the four elections coming up in the near future: the village and hamlet councils to be elected in early May, the presidential election tentatively scheduled for 3 September, the upper legislative house (Senate) election scheduled for 4 September, and the lower legislative house (Assembly) scheduled for one month after that.

THE PRESIDENT noted that this was not the same schedule that Prime Minister Ky had presented the previous day.

Ambassador Lodge acknowledged this and pointed out that Ky may have been over-optimistic. The schedule just outlined (according to US Embassy's best information) was the one presently being planned. Ambassador Lodge emphasized the importance of this electoral process and the course of constitutional development presently in train. He explained the role and influence of Vietnam's military establishment in present South Vietnamese politics.

and estimated that if the military could agree on a single candidate, most likely Ky or Thieu, that candidate would probably win. He gave a frank assessment of both Ky and Thieu, and concluded by expressing his belief that the US Government could live and work with either one and should not interfere in the contest now discreetly being waged for the support of the military establishment. Ambassador Lodge pointed out that the constitution drafting process could never have gone so smoothly or been completed so quickly had Ky and Thieu not both genuinely supported the process. Ky's ability to wave the "coonskin constitution" at Guam was a real triumph for Vietnam's present leadership and a profoundly significant indicator of progress.

THE PRESIDENT asked if there were no civilians capable of being serious contenders for the presidency in Vietnam.

Ambassador Lodge explained that the course of recent Vietnamese history had produced a breed of politicians trained in the techniques of plot and conspiracy but ill-suited by background or experience to provide positive political leadership. Ambassador Lodge noted that Tran Van Huong and Pham Khac Suu were probably the two leading civilian figures, but explained that neither was likely to win a national election, and that neither would make a particularly good president, especially Suu.

General Taylor endorsed Ambassador Lodge's assessment of Suu. (Someone--I am not sure who, but I think Secretary Rusk--asked whether the Constituent Assembly had brought forth any new leadership.)

Ambassador Lodge replied that it had produced some potentially promising figures but no one presently capable of winning the office of president.

Secretary Rusk (I think) asked about Dr. Phan Quang Don.

Ambassador Lodge replied that Dan had a certain measure of political skill and some following, and had performed quite credibly in recent months, but was not really presidential timber.

Ambassador Lodge then summarized the course of the electoral and constitutional process, stressed its importance, and the significance of the progress the GVN was making in this vital area. He then asked Mr. MacDonald to give a brief summary of current activity in the field of land reform.

Secretary Rusk interrupted to call everyone's attention to the great sensitivity of the just-completed discussion about possible Vietnamese presidential candidates and the names that had been brought up. The Secretary underlined the importance of protecting the secrecy of the fact that such a discussion was held by the American delegation. Mr. MacDonald (USAID Director) then gave a short résumé of current progress and problems in the field of land reform.

THE PRESIDENT expressed his belief in the great importance of this issue, noting the universal appeal of land ownership and the deep emotions it arouses. THE PRESIDENT asked if more use could not be made of photographs obtained from aerial reconnaissance, photographs which could be given to individual farmers with the borders of their land outlined on the picture. THE PRESIDENT cited examples from his own experience in the early days of the New Deal which showed the impact such photographs could have.

Mr. Komer noted that the technical resources for providing such a photographic service existed and volunteered General Momyer's assets. (General Momyer smiled but did not comment.)

General Humphreys (USAID Medical Director) made a short presentation on the topic of civilian casualties, outlining what was being done to minimize the hardship of war on the civilian population but

noting the difficulty in acquiring valid statistics. Helms called attention to the fact that--despite press comment and resulting public impressions to the contrary--much of the suffering in Vietnam, including burns, was not war-caused or necessarily war-related.

After this final presentation, the PRESIDENT made a few concluding remarks pulling the conference together and laying renewed stress on the central importance of making progress in the political, economic and nation-building sphere as well as in the military struggle.

* * * * *

Cautionary Comment: The above resumé of the 21 March session was reconstructed from a series of quite sketchy notes. These notes were taken for the private and exclusive use of Mr. Helms and myself to assist us in guiding Agency programs in a manner that would support the President's objectives and policies. The notes were never intended to serve as a basis for a complete reconstruction of the proceedings. These notes were incomplete and hence the above resumé is also incomplete, though to the best of my knowledge and belief it reflects accurately what was said on the points covered.

George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs