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APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: OCT. 2002

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TO STATE EYES ONLY FOR RUSK, HARRIMAN, BALL, HILSMAN, HUGHES

DSD EYES ONLY FOR MCNAMARA, GILPATRIC, TAYLOR, KRULAK,

MR WILLIAM BUNDY

WHITE HOUSE EYES ONLY FOR MC GEORGE BUNDY

ZEM

~~SECRET~~

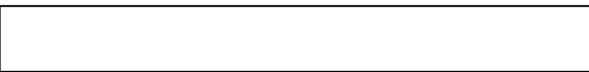


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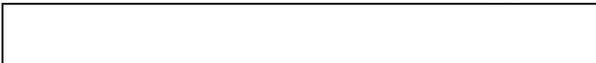
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FOLLOWING IS CAS SAIGON 2540



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1. GENERAL DON, ACCOMPANIED BY GENERALS KIM AND KHIEM, STATED 19 NOBEMBER THAT GEN BIG MINH HAD INVITED GENERAL PHOUMI PAY AN INCOGNITO AND DISCREET VISIT TO SAIGON AT END NOVEMBER. DON BELIEVES IT PARTICULARLY ESSENTIAL ESTABLISH GOOD RELATIONSHIPS WITH LAOS IN ORDER PERMIT A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT ALONG LAO-VIETNAM BORDER AGAINST VIET CONG LINES OF SUPPLY AND COMMUNICATION. HE SAID THAT LAOTIANS DO NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT FORCE TO COVER THIS AREA THEMSELVES AND ARE QUITE WILLING AND ANXIOUS THAT VIETNAMESE ASSIST BUT VIETNAMESE WISH TO BE CORRECT IN CLEARING ANY SUCH ACTIVITY WITH LAO. VIETNAMESE WOULD USE SPECIAL FORCES UNITS IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES AS REGULAR ARMY WOULD NOT HANDLE MATTER DISCREETLY ENOUGH. DON SAID THEY HAD HIGH REGARD FOR GENERAL PHOUMI AND LOOK FORWARD TO FRUITFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH HIM.

A. IMPORTANCE OF INCLUDING SOUVANNA PHOUMA IN ANY CONTACTS WITH LAOS. WE BELIEVE, AND GENERAL DON AGREED, THAT NEUTRALISTS AND GENERAL PHOUMI FORCES WORKING VERY WELL TOGETHER AND IT IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN THIS CLOSE COLLABORATION IN INTERESTS OF FREE WORLD.

B. IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING SOME FORM OF BALANCES IN LAOS RATHER THAN TAKING TOO VIGOROUS A POSITION, AS OPEN CONFLICT INVITES MAJOR DRV PARTICIPATION AND ALTHOUGH WE ARE WORKING ON IT, UP TO NOW WE HAVE NOT BUILT ADEQUATE STRENGTH ON NON-COMMUNIST SIDE TO WITHSTAND AN ONSLAUGHT.

✓ C. WITHIN THESE LIMITS WE CONCUR WITH DESIRABILITY OF CONTINUING AND STEPPING UP DISCREETLY HANDLED VIETNAMESE OPERATIONS IN CROSS BORDER AREA OF SAME NATURE WE TRAINED FOR AN INITIATED IN 1961 AND EARLY 1962, SUSPENDED DURING PERIOD IMMEDIATELY AFTER GENEVA ACCORDS OF 1962 AND HAVE ENDEAVORED TO RESUME IN RECENT MONTHS WITH FIRST RESULTS JUST COMING IN.

✓ 4. COMMENT: GENERALS WERE MOST CONFIDING AND OPEN IN EXPRESSING THEIR IDEAS BUT THEY ANTICIPATE THAT THEY WILL BE TREATED WITH DISCRETION. THUS REQUEST MOST LIMITED DISTRIBUTION THIS INFORMATION AND NON-EXPOSURE OUTSIDE AMERICAN CHANNELS IN ORDER ENCOURAGE GENERALS CONTINUE KEEP OPEN A FRANK AND HONEST MUTUAL CHANNEL OF INFORMATION AND SUGGESTION.

✓ 5. THIS MESSAGE PASSED TO AMBASSADOR LODGE AND GENERAL HARKINS. SUGGEST ADDRESSES PASS TO LOCAL AMBASSADORS ON LIMITED BASIS.

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