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23 SEP 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant to the DCI

SUBJECT: DCI Congressional Briefings On Vietnam

Attached is a brief statement of the thrust of Mr. McCone's remarks before congressional committees and Senators Russell and Saltonstall on the dates indicated. If there is further that I can do on this, would you please advise.

[Redacted Signature Box]

Assistant Legislative Counsel

Attachment

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE  DATE:  
03-25-2009

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## DCI CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFINGS ON VIETNAM

CIA Subcommittee of House Armed Services  
23 September 1963

The Director said there did not appear to be any cohesive military group capable of ousting the Diem regime, and further that there appeared to be no replacement for the then current regime which was capable of running the government. A new regime probably would be no better. Consequently, the Agency was urging a cautious, slow approach to the problem.

Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
10 October 1963

"We have not seen a successor government in the wings that we could say positively would be an improvement over Diem. Therefore, it has been our counsel that we must proceed cautiously, otherwise a situation might flare up which might result in something of a civil war, and the communists would come out the victor merely by sitting on the sidelines."

Far East Subcommittee of House Foreign Affairs  
23 October 1963

A successful coup may or may not be an improvement, and discouragement was indicated over the possibility of the Diem regime reforming its ways and regaining the confidence of the people. On the other hand, there seemed to be no replacement government waiting in the wings and the generals for the most part had no political experience. Hence it might be assumed that some protracted period of political confusion would result from a coup, and the effect that this might have on the future of the war could not be determined.

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CIA Subcommittees of Senate Armed Services and  
Senate Appropriations Committees  
29 October 1963

No statement regarding future prospects of the war in  
Vietnam noted in the Memorandum for the Record.

Briefings of Senators Russell and Saltonstall  
1 November 1963

In reporting on the coup then in progress and its effect on  
the war, the Director indicated that a structure had been built to  
prosecute the war and political events in the city had not yet signifi-  
cantly affected the war. It was not expected that the war would  
collapse because of the coup, noting it had not been the CIA view  
that the war would fail if Diem stayed in power.

CIA Subcommittee of House Appropriations  
6 November 1963

Regarding the specific circumstances of the coup, the Director  
noted that the political situation would have to be watched most care-  
fully and inevitably there would be considerable confusion for a time.  
No specific remarks were noted with regard to the general future  
situation. At that time it was not known what kind of new government  
would come forth.

CIA Subcommittee of House Armed Services  
7 November 1963

Same as 6 November 1963.

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CIA Subcommittee of House Appropriations  
6 December 1963

The Director stated he was extremely worried about the situation in Vietnam pointing out that the government of Vietnam could not get congealed and there was some dissension within the ruling forces. He commented there was not full rapport between the leaders and indicated that civilians were not fully brought into the government at that time. Those who had been brought in had unclear authority. The war effort had not been improved by the new government and Viet-Cong activities had increased. The DCI noted that his concern with the situation did not mean that it was in danger of going down the drain or that it was desperate. On the other hand, he indicated he saw little forward thrust. The DCI indicated that the U. S. should not go in with its own forces and fight this war, that U. S. strategy to train South Vietnamese to do their own fighting is sound. On the other hand, the U. S. could not simply pull out of South Vietnam and should "play the hand out." With respect to the then current Vietnam leaders, it was indicated that many of them are responsible and with considerable abilities but reiterated there is evidence of developing tensions and rivalries.

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21 September 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

On 16 April 1964 the DCI briefed the CIA Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. The Director indicated that the situation in South Vietnam was not good and that there are more reasons to be pessimistic than optimistic. On the favorable side he pointed out that Khanh has shown potential sagacity and has a substantial government. But on the unfavorable side he pointed out that over the last six months the Viet Cong have stepped up their attacks and increased their military effectiveness. In addition, the Viet Cong are taking actions in the political and civic action fields and today control larger areas. Consequently, the people are getting discouraged and more apathetic.

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21 September 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

On 19 May 1964 the DCI briefed the CIA Subcommittees of the Senate Armed Services and Senate Appropriations Committees. The Director stated that since Khanh took over the government in Saigon he has shown considerable leadership and political sagacity. However, he has a number of problems involving a number of leaders in the government, leaders of the military and the provisional chiefs and the heads of the four Corps areas. The Director noted there were beaurocratic rivalries and some of the civilian ministers feel they do not have sufficient authority. "Hence, in my judgment, there are more reasons to doubt the future of the East under present programs and moderate extensions to existing programs; (i. e., harrassing sabotage against NVN, border crossings, etc.) than there are reasons to be optimistic about the future of our Corps in South Vietnam.

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21 September 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

On 18 June 1964 the DCI briefed the CIA Subcommittee of the House Armed Services. The Director noted that the Viet Cong still hold the initiative throughout most of the country. DCI said the government's position is most serious and that densely populated areas around Saigon and that the Government's large and small scale operations against the Viet Cong has been showing some lag in the past few weeks.

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21 September 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

On 12 August 1964 the DCI briefed Defense Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. The Director commented on the

[Redacted] He indicated that there had been many disappointments with these operations, [Redacted]

[Redacted] The DCI pointed out that he was not offering this criticism but that it is disturbing

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