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Ambassador Lodge praised the decision to deploy U. S. troops to Vietnam. The recent overthrow of the Communists in Indonesia is a direct result of our having taken a firm stand in Vietnam.

Analyzing the situation in the past few months, he said the events of March were really a counterattack on U. S. successes. The Saigon Government is now almost paralyzed but we will have to learn to work in this atmosphere. Military activity can go ahead and pacification can proceed, apart from developments in Saigon. Complicated things cannot be undertaken now by the Saigon Government. The word for the future is evolution rather than stability.

Secretary Rusk: We base our support of South Vietnam on their desire not to have the Viet Cong take them over by force. A broad-based constituent Assembly is now required. It would be a real setback for us if this Assembly does not come out of the present political activity in Saigon. In order to ensure that Saigon will act, we may have to go so far as to use the threat to get out of Vietnam.

Our military assistance to Vietnam is based on the SEATO treaty and the Tonkin Gulf resolution of August. We must oppose the serious effort which is being made to downgrade these two commitments. We must staunchly support the SEATO treaty commitment. If they get us out from under these two commitments, then they get us out of our basic Southeast Asian policy.

The President: To those who are testifying on the Hill, we should give a summary of the speeches and Congressional reports issued at the time of the approval of the SEATO treaty and of the August resolution.

Secretary McNamara: Political events in Saigon are causing trouble in the military area. There are fewer Vietnamese casualties. We hope that heavy pressure by U. S. forces will carry us over the present period.

The President reviewed three years of involvement in the Vietnam problem, expressing doubt that an unusually large amount of time was spent considering new proposals or changes in policy. Our strategy has been the same for three years. There are island hoppers who jump from issue to issue and there are those who would put a bag of cement on the back of the man running the race. We are committed and we will not be deterred. We must accept the fact that some will always oppose, dissent and criticize. We want results.

It is acceptable that we referee some of the fights between General Ky and others in the Saigon government.

Robert Komer: There are three harmful effects arising out of our military effort in Vietnam:

- a. Anti-Americanism.
- b. Inflation caused by the military buildup of both the U.S. and South Vietnam.
- c. Our pacification program has been out-run by our search and destroy Capability.

If the United States is blamed for these effects, real harm will be done to us during the forthcoming election period in Vietnam. We must have a program to avoid runaway inflation, and we must limit the inflationary effect of our military buildup at once. We must double the number of those in the Rural Development cadres. The manpower needed a small claim on military resources.

Bill Moyers: Current press speculation is harmful. No comment should be made to the press until Ambassador Lodge completes his consultation here.

The President: There are 26 men in this room. There must be no comment to the press about our discussions. Don't make it more difficult for me to make a decision.

Brouley Smith

ATTENDEES FOR 557th NSC MEETING

May 10, 1966

The Vice President

Secretary of State Rusk

Under Secretary Ball

Ambassador Goldberg

Ambassador Lodge

Assistant Secretary William Bundy

Deputy Assistant Secretary Unger

Philip C. Habib, Political Officer, Saigon

General Lansdale, Political Officer, Saigon

Secretary of Defense McNamara

Assistant Secretary McNaughton

Deputy Secretary Vance

Treasury Secretary Fowler

AID Administrator Gaud

CIA Director Raborn

Deputy Director Helms

JCS Chairman Wheeler

OEP Director Bryant

USIA Director Marks

Bill Moyers

Walt Rostow

Robert Komer

Robert Kintner

Jack Valenti

General Maxwell Taylor

Bromley Smith