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SERVICE SET

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FROM WALT BOSTON
TO THE PRESIDENT
CITE CAP82546

OCT 12 14 38

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Hawans/Double R

~~SECRET~~ SENSITIVE LITERALLY EYES ONLY

OCTOBER 12, 1968

HERewith THE LUCID, FIRM BUNKER-ABRAMS RESPONSE.

1. GENERAL ABRAMS AND I INTERPRET THE EXCHANGE WITH HANOI AT THE ELEVENTH PRIVATE MEETING AS A FAIRLY CLEAR INDICATION THAT HANOI IS READY FOR A TACTICAL SHIFT FROM THE BATTLEFIELD TO THE CONFERENCE TABLE.
2. WE CONCUR IN THE INSTRUCTION TO HARRIMAN AND VANCE, AND BELIEVE HANOI WILL GIVE INDICATIONS THAT IT FINDS PARA ONE "ACCEPTABLE", AND PARAS TWO AND THREE "UNDERSTANDABLE". WE WOULD REGARD SUCH A RESPONSE AS MEETING OUR ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR A CESSATION OF THE BOMBING.
3. WE WELCOME THE ASSURANCE THAT THIEU AND OTHER KEY ALLIES WILL BE CONSULTED.
4. I BELIEVE THAT THIEU WILL FIND THE INSTRUCTIONS ACCEPTABLE, DESPITE THE FACT THAT HE HAS BEEN UNDER SOME PRESSURE FROM THE HARDLINERS TO TOUGHEN HIS STAND ON NEGOTIATIONS. HIS MAIN CONCERN, I THINK, WILL BE THAT HE WILL SEE THIS AS THE PRECURSOR TO AN EARLY CEASE-FIRE, WHICH HE WOULD PREFER TO PUT OFF AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.
5. WE BELIEVE THAT THIEU MUST BE GIVEN TIME TO INFORM VP KY, PRIMIN HUONG, MINDEFENSE AND POSSIBLY ONE OR TWO OTHERS, SHORTLY BEFORE OUR ACTION BECOMES KNOWN, SO THAT THEIR FULL COOPERATION WILL BE ENLISTED. IF THEY FIRST HEAR NEWS FROM PUBLIC SOURCES IT WOULD AROUSE SUSPICION, CERTAINLY IN KY AND OTHERS.
6. OUR FURTHER COMMENTS ON SIGNIFICANCE OF HANOI'S POSITION AT OCTOBER 11 PRIVATE MEETING, AND WHY IT LOOKS FROM HERE AS THOUGH HANOI IS AT LAST READY TO MOVE TO THE CONFERENCE TABLE, ARE IN A SEPARATE MESSAGE.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NLS 85-08

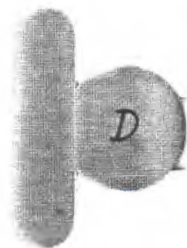
By lig, NARS, Date 3-27-86

DTG: 121431Z OCT 68

SERVICE SET

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10/12/88 - R/W*

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SERVICE SET



Department of State

61a
TELEGRAM

~~SECRET~~

OO RUEHC
DE RUMJIR 40117/1 2031212
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 121145Z OCT 68 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2474
STATE GRNC
BT

~~SECRET~~ SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 40117

NODIS/HARVAN/DOUBLE PLUS

FROM AMBASSADOR BUNKER AND GENERAL ABRAMS

REF: STATE 254365

1. THE STAND TAKEN BY THE HANOI DELEGATES AT 11TH PRIVATE MEETING INDICATES A CLEAR DESIRE TO SHIFT THEIR MAIN EFFORT FROM THE BATTLEFIELD TO THE CONFERENCE TABLE. THIS HAS COME AS NO SURPRISE TO US. WE WERE DRAFTING A PAPER WHICH THOUGHT THIS WAS A LIKELY EARLY MOVE BY HANOI, AND MUCH OF THE FOLLOWING IS TAKEN FROM THAT PAPER.

2. THERE HAS BEEN A STEADY DETERIORATION IN HANOI'S POSITION IN SOUTH VIETNAM EVER SINCE THE MILITARY DEFEATS WHICH OVERTOOK THEIR GENERAL OFFENSIVE AT TET AND AGAIN IN MAY/JUNE. THE AUGUST/SEPT OFFENSIVE COULD NOT EVEN BE GOT OFF THE GROUND AND WAS THE WEAKEST OF ALL THREE ATTACKS. AFTER TEN MONTHS OF ENORMOUS EFFORT, HANOI AND THE NLF HAVE NOTHING TO SHOW FOR THE LOSS OF OVER 150,000 KILLED, PLUS THE THOUSAND KILLED BY B-52 AND OTHER AIR ATTACKS, OR WHO DIED OF WOUNDS OR DISEASE, OR WERE CAPTURED, OR DEFECTED, OR WERE ELIMINATED BY ARREST.

3. AT THE SAME TIME HANOI HAS SEEN THE EMERGENCE IN THE SOUTH OF A STRONGER AND MORE CONFIDENT GOVERNMENT UNDER THIEU AND HUONG; A STRONGER AND MORE EFFECTIVE AND AGGRESSIVE SOUTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY AND PARA-MILITARY FORCE; A GROWING BITTERNESS AND HOSTILITY TOWARD COMMUNISM AMONG THE PEOPLE; AND AN ARMING OF THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES IN THE CIVILIAN SELF-DEFENSE CORPS. THERE HAVE BEEN NO MASS DEFECTIONS TO THE COMMUNISTS FROM THE NATIONALIST SIDE IN THE SOUTH -- CIVIL OR MILITARY.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NLS 85-08

By uz, NARS, Date 3-27-86

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SERVICE SET

3. WE HAVE BEEN GRADUALLY ACCUMULATING EVIDENCE SINCE ABOUT APRIL/MAY THAT COMMUNIST SUPPORTERS AND CADRES IN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN RANKS WERE BEGINNING TO DOUBT VICTORY AND TO LOSE FAITH IN THEIR LEADERS. MORE AND MORE TIME OF THE LEADERS IN RECENT WEEKS HAS BEEN DEVOTED TO MAINTAINING FAITH IN VICTORY AND TO OVERCOMING THE ARGUMENT THAT THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE AND THEIR ALLIES ARE "TOO STRONG TO BE ATTACKED." HOWEVER, THE NLF HAS BEEN HAVING MORE AND MORE TROUBLE RECRUITING IN THE SOUTH AS PEOPLE LEFT CONTROLLED OR THREATENED AREAS FOR GOVT-CONTROLLED AREAS, AND AS THE GOVERNMENT INCREASED ITS MOBILIZATION AND DEPRIVED THE COMMUNISTS OF MANPOWER RESOURCES.

4. THE LOSS OF SOUTHERN-BORN CADRES WAR PARTICULARLY WORRYING, AS THESE CADRES WERE SHIFTED IN LARGE NUMBERS FROM GUERRILLA, PROSELYTIZING AND CIVIL WORK INTO THE REGULAR FORCES, WHERE THEY WERE CHEWED UP IN BATTLE. OTHERS DESERTED, OR WERE KILLED, CAPTURED, ARRESTED OR DEFECTED. THE 75/25 RATIO OF SOUTHERN TO NORTHERN TROOPS IN THE REGULAR FORCES WAS REVERSED WITHIN THE YEAR, AND COULD NOT BE CONCEALED. AS HUSBANDS, SONS AND BROTHERS FELT THEIR HAMLETS NOT TO BE SEEN OR HEARD FROM AGAIN AND THERE WERE NO SIGNS OF PEACE, RESISTIVENESS AND RESISTANCE BEGAN TO BE REPORTED IN SOME COMMUNIST CONTROLLED AREAS.

5. BEGINNING WITH KHE SANH, OUR B-52 STRIKES BECAME A DEVASTATING TACTICAL WEAPON. THESE STRIKES AND OTHER AIR BOMBING OF THE NORTHERN PANHANDLE, IN NEW BOMBING PATTERS AND DESIGNS, HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY CONSTRAINED THE MOVEMENT OF SUPPLIES THROUGH THE DMZ AND INTO LAOS. THIS, AND THE WHOLESALÉ UNCOVERING OF CACHES IN THE LAST COUPLE OF MONTHS -- A PRODUCT OF IMPROVED INTELLIGENCE, GREATER COOPERATION OF THE PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, AND INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY POW'S AND DEFECTORS -- HAVE CREATED SUPPLY DIFFICULTIES FOR THE ENEMY.

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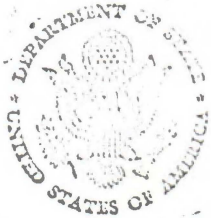
~~3 SAIGON 40117, SECTION ONE OF TWO, OCTOBER 12, 1968~~

6. A RECORD NUMBER OF ENEMY BATTALIONS WERE WITHDRAWN INTO NORTH VIETNAM, LAOS AND CAMBODIA IN THE LAST DAYS OF SEPT AND EARLY OCTOBER, SIGNIFYING AN END TO THE "THIRD OFFENSIVE." WE THEREFORE CONCLUDE THAT HANOI HAS HAD TO SEEK A RESPIRE ON BOTH MILITARY AND MORALE GROUNDS.
7. WHAT ELSE MAY BE MOTIVATING HANOI IN THIS LATEST MOVE AT THE ELEVENTH PRIVATE MEETING, WE CAN ONLY SPECULATE ABOUT. IT MAY BE THAT HANOI ASSUMES THAT IF IT CAN GET THE BOMBING STOPPED AND KEEP IT STOPPED UNTIL JAN 20, THE NEXT PRESIDENT WILL FIND IT VERY DIFFICULT TO RESUME THE BOMBING. MEANWHILE IT WILL HAVE TIME TO REST AND RESUPPLY AND PREPARE FOR A RE-NEWED STRUGGLE IN THE SPRING. GEN ABRAMS BELIEVES THAT A BOMBING CESSATION IT WILL TAKE AT LEAST TWO OR THREE MONTHS FOR HANOI TO REBUILD FOR ANOTHER ATTACK.

~~DUNKER~~

~~SECRET~~

SERVICE SET



Department of State

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TELEGRAM

~~SECRET~~

OO RUENG
DE RUMJIN 40117/2 2861238
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 121145Z OCT 68 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2475
STATE GRNC
BT

CONTROL: 4 1 6 0
OCTOBER 12, 1968
9:05 AM

~~SECRET~~ SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 40117

NODIS/HARVAN/DOUBLE PLUS

9. ANOTHER POSSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR THE SUDDEN SWITCH BY HANOI IS THAT IT SEES ITSELF AS IN THE RELATIVELY STRONGEST POSITION IT IS EVER LIKELY TO BE FOR PURPOSES OF NEGOTIATIONS, AND IF IT WAITS ANY LONGER TO NEGOTIATE THERE MAY BE AN EROSION OF ITS SUPPORT IN THE SOUTH OR A FURTHER WEAKENING OF ITS RELATIVE POSITION AS THE THIEU GOVERNMENT MOVES INTO MORE OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS ON THE SEVERAL FRONTS -- MILITARY, CHIEU HOI, ANTI-VC INFRASTRUCTURE, REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT AND PACIFICATION.

10. A THIRD POSSIBILITY IS HANOI'S FEAR OF A NIXON VICTORY AND WHAT THAT MIGHT PORTEND.

11. FINALLY, IT MAY WELL BE THAT HANOI HAS DRAWN THE CONCLUSION THAT THE US WILL NOT DISENGAGE IN VIETNAM NO MATTER WHO IS ELECTED, AND THAT IT MUST NOW MAKE THE BEST POSSIBLE BARGAIN WHILE IT IS STILL IN A COMPARATIVELY STRONG POSITION TO NEGOTIATE.

12. WE PERSONALLY FEEL THAT SOME OR ALL THESE FACTORS HAVE PLAYED A PART, BUT WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT IS THAT EACH OF THESE FACTORS PUTS HANOI IN A DEFENSIVE POSITION. HANOI DID NOT TAKE THE STAND THEY DID AT THE 11TH MEETING BECAUSE VICTORY WAS IN THEIR GRASP, BUT BECAUSE VICTORY HAS ELUDED THEM AND THEY MUST NOW SEEK THE BEST POSSIBLE TERMS. FOR THIS REASON WE VENTURE TO PREDICT THAT HANOI WILL SOON PROPOSE A CEASE-FIRE.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NLS 85-08

By cg, NARS, Date 3-27-86

UNCLASSIFIED

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-2-SAIGON 40117 SECTION TWO OF TWO OCTOBER 12, 1968

13. A COMPLETE CESSATION OF BOMBING WILL CAUSE SOME APPREHENSION HERE, BUT I DO NOT THINK IT NEED WORRY US EXCESSIVELY. WE SHALL MAINTAIN A MILITARY OFFENSIVE IN THE SOUTH, THE STEPPED UP PACIFICATION CAMPAIGN TO EXTEND CONTROL OVER MORE CONTESTED HAMLETS WILL BE ANNOUNCED ON OCT 21, AND THE INTENSIFIED CHIEU HOI AND PHOENIX PROGRAM ATTACKING THE VC INFRASTRUCTURE WILL BE PRESSED SIMULTANEOUSLY.

14. WE EXPECT THAT THE NVA/VC WILL TRY TO INTENSIFY THE FIGHTING AS THE SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS START, BUT WE DO NOT THINK THEY HAVE A CAPABILITY FOR SUSTAINED ACTION DURING THE NEXT TWO OR THREE MONTHS AND WILL NEED THAT TIME TO REPAIR THEIR SUPPLY BASE.

15. WE DO NOT WANT TO LEAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT WE THINK THE WAR IS OVER OR THAT THE NORTH VIETNAM OR VC FORCES ARE ABOUT TO COLLAPSE. THEIR FANATICAL FAITH IN THE RIGHTNESS OF THEIR CAUSE, THE FEAR OF REPRISAL AND RETRIBUTION IN BOTH THE SOUTH AND THE NORTH IN THE EVENT OF DEFEAT, THE PROFESSIONALISM OF MEN WHO HAVE MADE REVOLUTION THEIR LIFE AND CAREER, THE EXTRAORDINARY INVESTMENT OF LIVES AND HOPE OVER SO MANY YEARS, THE TRADITION OF DISCIPLINE, AND THE ASIAN, COUPLED WITH COMMUNIST, INDIFFERENCE TO LIVES, ALL SUGGEST THAT HANOI AND THE NLF WILL CONTINUE TO FIGHT WITH UNDIMISHED FERVOR.

16. UP TO NOW HANOI'S POLITICAL EFFORT HAS BEEN SECONDARY TO ITS MILITARY EFFORT AS HANOI SOUGHT A MILITARY BREAKTHROUGH. WHAT WE NOW EXPECT IS THAT THE MAJOR EFFORT WILL SHIFT TO THE POLITICAL FRONT, WITH THE MILITARY IN A SECONDARY AND SUPPORTING ROLE. WE BELIEVE THAT THERE WILL BE VERY HEAVY FIGHTING UP TO THE TIME A CEASE-FIRE IS ARRANGED OR OTHER STEPS ARE AGREED TO DIMINSH THE CONFLICT.

BUNKER
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SERVICE SET

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SERVICE SET

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Department of State

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TELEGRAM
ACTION COPY

OO RUEHC
DE RUMJIR 40178 2871245
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 131230Z OCT 68 ZFF-1
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2497
STATE GRNC
BT

4 3 2 00
1968 OCT 13 AM 9 35

~~SECRET~~ SAIGON 40178

DECLASSIFIED

NODIS/HARVAN/DOUBLE PLUS

Authority NLS 85-08

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH THIEU.

By mc, NARS, Date 3-27-86

1. THIEU CONCURS IN INSTRUCTIONS TO BE GIVEN HARRIMAN-VANCE.
2. GENERAL ABRAMS, AMB BERGER AND I HAD HOUR AND A HALF MEETING WITH HIM TONIGHT. WE WENT OVER DEVELOPMENTS OF LAST FOUR DAYS STARTING WITH OCTOBER 9 TEA BREAK, AND GAVE HIM ORALLY PARAPHRASED VERSION OF INSTRUCTIONS AND HOW WE INTENDED TO PROCEED ON ALL FRONTS.
3. ABRAMS OUTLINED MILITARY SITUATION AND IMPLICATIONS OF A BOMBING CESSATION ON MILITARY POSITION, AND WE EXCHANGED VIEWS AS TO WHAT MILITARY OR OTHER REASONS PROMPTED HANOI TO SHIFT TO NEGOTIATIONS. THIEU ASKED WHETHER WE INTENDED MAKE REFERENCE TO INFILTRATION, AND WE SAID NO AND ABRAMS AND I PERSUADED HIM THAT WE CAN HANDLE WHATEVER THEY SEND DOWN. THIEU THOUGHT THAT IF HANOI IS SERIOUS IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS THEY WILL SOON PROPOSE CEASE-FIRE.
4. WE THEN TOGETHER SKETCHED OUT THE SEQUENCE OF NEXT MOVES:
 - A. THIEU AGREES TO INSTRUCTIONS.
 - B. WE NOTIFY OTHER CONTRIBUTORS.
 - C. HARRIMAN-VANCE PUT PROPOSALS TO HANOI AT PARIS.
 - D. IF HANOI ACCEPTS THEM, WASHINGTON AND SAIGON WORK OUT TIMING FOR CESSATION, AND DATE OF MEETING WHICH GVN WILL JOIN.
 - E. JOINT JOHNSON-THIEU ANNOUNCEMENT MADE THAT ATTACKS ON NORTH STOPPED IN EFFORT TO FIND BASIS FOR PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. THIEU UNDERSTANDS FULLY THAT WE WILL NOT USE WORDS LIKE RECIPROCAL ACTIONS, AGREEMENT OF HANOI, ETC., AND NEED FOR SECRECY.
5. THIEU WILL INFORM A FEW KEY COLLEAGUES TOMORROW OF LATEST DEVELOPMENTS AND HIS DECISION.
6. FOREGOING ARE BARE-BONES. WILL SEND FULLER REPORT TOMORROW.

WORKER

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SERVICE SET



Department of State

ACTION COPY

EXCISE

PP RUEHC
DE RUMJIR 40220 2380505
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 140500Z OCT 68
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2504
STATE GRNC
BT

4 4 1 12
OCTOBER 14, 1968
3:51 A.M.

LBJ LIBRARY
Mandatory Review
Case # NLJ 85-08
Document # 634

~~SECRET~~ SAIGON 40220

NODIS/HARVAN/DOUBLE PLUS

REF: EMSTEL 40178.

SUBJ: MEETING WITH THIEU OCTOBER 8.

FOLLOWING IS FULLER ACCOUNT OF OUR MEETING YESTERDAY WITH THIEU, WHICH I PROMISED IN PARA 6 REFTEL.

1. I STARTED BY SAYING WE NEEDED TO SEE HIM URGENTLY BECAUSE IMPORTANT-- AND WE THOUGHT FAVORABLE -- DEVELOPMENTS HAD TAKEN PLACE IN LAST TWO DAYS IN CONNECTION WITH PARIS TALKS. I THEN REVIEWED THE TEA BREAK OF OCTOBER 9, THE PRIVATE MEETING ON OCT 11, AND I SAID WE DREW THE CONCLUSION FROM ALL THIS THAT HANOI WAS ABOUT READY TO TALK SERIOUSLY. WE THOUGHT THE MAIN REASON FOR THIS WAS THE MILITARY REVERSES SUFFERED THIS YEAR BY THE NVA/VC.

2. I THEN ASKED GENERAL ABRAMS TO REVIEW THE MILITARY SITUATION. HE MADE A BRILLIANT PRESENTATION OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED THIS YEAR DESCRIBING THE THREE OFFENSIVES, THE TREMENDOUS INFILTRATION AND LOGISTICAL EFFORT THAT THIS INVOLVED; THE FAILURE OF THE OFFENSIVES, EACH WEAKER THAN THE LAST; AND THE ENORMOUS CASUALTIES AND EQUIPMENT LOSSES SUFFERED. HE DISCUSSED THE EVIDENCE OF GROWING MORALE AND LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS OF THE ENEMY, THE END OF ENEMY OFFENSIVE ACTION ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO; AND THE WITHDRAWAL IN SEPT/OCT. OF OVER 60 BATTALIONS ACROSS THE DMZ, OR INTO LAOS AND CAMBODIA.

3. ABRAMS ENDED BY SAYING "WE ARE GETTING STRONGER. THE ENEMY IS GETTING WEAKER. HE HAS THROWN EVERYTHING HE CAN AT US. WE HAVE BEEN MORE THAN A MATCH FOR HIM. THE ARVN FORCES IMPROVE AND ARE MORE EFFECTIVE EVERY WEEK. THE COMMUNISTS CANNOT MOUNT ANOTHER OFFENSIVE FOR TWO TO THREE MONTHS, AND POSSIBLY LONGER. WHATEVER THEY CAN MOUNT WE CAN HANDLE."

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/HR

REVIEWED BY N.V. Hall DATE FEB 1 1968

SENDER: RISE CO. H.S. EXT. DATE 7/2

TS AUTH. REASON

ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS

DECLASSIFIED/RELEASABLE

RELEASE DENIED

PK or PCI EXEMPTIONS

COPY LBJ LIB

SANITIZED

Authority NLS 85-08

By [signature], NARS, Date 8-26-86

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4. THIEU ASKED WHETHER WE THOUGHT HANOI WAS NOT SERIOUS ABOUT NEGOTIATIONS, OR MERELY PLAYING FOR TIME WITH THE INTENTION OF RENEWING THE ATTACK. WAS THE ENEMY WEAK OR STRONG? WE EXCHANGED VIEWS ON THESE POINTS CONCLUDING THAT HANOI WAS SERIOUS ABOUT NEGOTIATIONS, THAT IS STILL HAD FORMIDABLE POWER, AND WAS IN A STRONG NEGOTIATING POSITION, AND THAT THERE WOULD BE MORE AND HEAVY FIGHTING BEFORE THERE WAS A SETTLEMENT. WE COULD NOT REALLY TELL HOW SERIOUS HANOI WANTED A SETTLEMENT UNTIL WE GOT DOWN TO BARGAINING.

5. I THEN PRESENTED OUR PROPOSED LINE OF ACTION, INSTRUCTIONS TO HARRIMAN/VANCE, ETC.

6. THIEU ASKED WHY WE DID NOT MAKE INFILTRATION AN ISSUE. WE EXPLAINED THIS WAS VAGUE, WHEREAS THE POINTS WE WERE ESTABLISHING WERE CLEAR. MOREOVER WE COULD HANDLE WHATEVER INFILTRATION HANOI WOULD THROW IN.

7. THIEU THEN SAID SO LONG AS WE ARE GOING TO PRESS THE OFFENSIVE IN THE SOUTH AND IN LAOS, AND SO LONG AS WE ARE PREPARED TO RESUME THE BOMBING IF THEY VIOLATE THE DMZ OR ATTACK THE MAIN CITIES, HE IS READY TO GO ALONG. "AFTER ALL," HE SAID, "THE PROBLEM IS NOT TO STOP THE BOMBING, BUT TO STOP THE WAR, AND WE MUST TRY THIS PATH TO SEE IF THEY ARE SERIOUS." I THOUGHT THIS A STATESMAN'S VIEW.

8. THIEU THEN SAID IF THE COMMUNISTS ARE IN THE DIFFICULTIES WE THINK THEY ARE THEY SHOULD PROPOSE A CEASE-FIRE SHORTLY AFTER THE SERIOUS TALKS START. I SAID I THOUGHT THIS WAS VERY POSSIBLE.

9. THIEU SAID WE MUST NOT FALL INTO THIS TRAP: WE CAN WELCOME A CEASEFIRE PROPOSAL AND SAY WE ARE READY TO NEGOTIATE ON IT, BUT WE MUST MAKE CEASE-FIRE A PART OF THE GENERAL SETTLEMENT, OR AT LEAST NOT AGREE TO IT UNTIL WE HAVE SOME UNDERSTANDINGS ON OTHER THINGS SUCH AS WITHDRAWAL OF FORCES. I SAID AS HE KNEW FROM OUR JOINT NEGOTIATING MEETINGS, WE WERE WELL AWARE OF THE PITFALLS.

10. WE THEN TALKED ABOUT TIMING AND PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING NEXT ACTION, AS REPORTED IN PARA 4 REFTEL. I MADE IT CLEAR THAT WE COULD NOT SAY PUBLICLY THAT THERE WERE CONDITIONS OR RECIPROCITY, BUT THE FACTS WOULD SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES. HE UNDERSTOOD.

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SERVICE SET

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-3- SAIGON 40220, OCTOBER 14, NODIS/HARVAN DOUBLE PLUS

11. GENERAL ABRAMS SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT TO MOVE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE ON ALL FRONTS. THE PRESIDENT'S STEPPED-UP PACIFICATION PLAN TO BE ANNOUNCED OCTOBER 21 COULD NOT BE MORE TIMELY. THE ATTACK ON COMMUNIST INFRASTRUCTURE, THE GREATER EFFORT TO WIN OVER HOI CHANH, INTENSIFIED RF AND PF ACTION -- ALL THESE HAD TO BE PRESSED. THE INITIATIVE IS NOW WITH US AND WE MUST TAKE FIRST ADVANTAGE EVERYWHERE. PRESIDENT THIEU AGREED.

12. COMMENT: I MUST CONFESS I THOUGHT THIEU WOULD WANT TO THINK OVER-NIGHT ABOUT THIS BEFORE PROVIDING AN ANSWER, BUT HE RESPONDED IMMEDIATELY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY. MOST TIMES HE THINKS CLEARLY AND LOGICALLY. THIS MEETING WAS THE LATEST DEMONSTRATION OF THIS, AND IT IS ALSO THE ANSWER TO THOSE WHO THINK HE IS INDECISIVE.

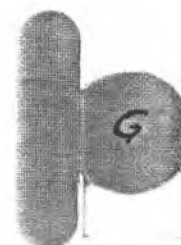
13. ACTION REQUESTED: WOULD DEPT PLEASE SEND URGENTLY DRAFT TEXT OF JOINT ANNOUNCEMENT TO BE MADE BY PRESIDENT AND THIEU. FOR US TO HAVE A LOOK AT. BUNKER
BT

~~SECRET~~

SERVICE SET

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SERVICE SET

SANITIZED
Authority NLS 85-02
By mg, NARS, Date 6-12-85

~~TOP SECRET~~

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ZZ YEMDLG
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FM WHITE HOUSE WASHDC
TO ANEMB SAIGON
ZEM

OCT 14 03 22

SANITIZED

~~TOP SECRET~~ LITERALLY EYES ONLY
CITE CAPG2572
LITERALLY EYES ONLY FOR AMB BUNKER AND GEN ABRAMS FROM
WALT ROSTOV

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT ONE OF THE MAJOR CONCERNS OF THE PRESIDENT AT THE MOMENT IS THAT WE EXAMINE WITH UTMOST CARE THE LOOP-HOLES AND CONTINGENCIES IN THE DEAL WE ARE CONSIDERING TO MAKE SURE IT IS AS COPPER-PLATED AS WE CAN MAKE IT.

FOR EXAMPLE, HE WISHES YOU TO EXAMINE THE POSSIBILITY THAT HANOI IS SIMPLY SEEKING A RESPITE TO PREPARE FOR A LATER OFFENSIVE, CREATING AN INTERIM AN ATMOSPHERE OF HOPEFUL EXPECTATIONS AND EUPHORIA WHICH WOULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR US TO RESUME BOMBING OF THE NORTH AND OTHERWISE MAINTAIN THE REMARKABLE MOMENTUM ON THE GROUND YOU HAVE ACHIEVED AND WHICH EXPLAINS SO MUCH OF WHAT MAY NOW BE HOPEFUL IN THE CURRENT SITUATION.

SPECIFICALLY:

[1. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE ENEMY'S WEATHER AND SUPPLY SITUATION AND PROSPECTS AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE COMPLEXITY OF THE DIPLOMATIC PROBLEMS THAT MAY LIE AHEAD, WHAT WOULD BE A REASONABLE AND SECURE INTERVAL IN WHICH TO ASSESS WHETHER HANOI IS SERIOUSLY INTERESTED IN MAKING PEACE, ONCE "SERIOUS" NEGOTIATIONS START?

FOR EXAMPLE, IT TOOK ONLY A MONTH TO WIND UP THE 1954 GENEVA NEGOTIATION ONCE IT BECAME SERIOUS ABOUT JUNE 20. WOULD THIRTY DAYS NOW BE A REASONABLE INTERVAL BEFORE WE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED A BOMBING RESUMPTION? PLEASE GIVE US YOUR JOINT ASSESSMENT.

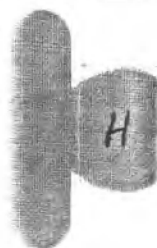
2. ARE YOU CONFIDENT YOU CAN MAINTAIN THE MORALE, FIGHTING SPIRIT, AND MOMENTUM OF THE ARVN AND OUR OWN FORCES ONCE SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS START?

3. YOU MAY WISH TO CONSIDER ON A CONTINGENCY BASIS THE STANDING RULES OF ENGAGEMENT YOU WOULD RECOMMEND REQUIRED TO PROTECT THE SECURITY AND MORALE OF OUR FORCES AND THOSE OF OUR ALLIES IN THE FACE OF MINOR DMZ VIOLATIONS, TO WHICH THE FIELD COMMANDER WOULD HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO RESPOND WITHOUT RECOURSE TO WASHINGTON AND THE LEVEL OF INFRACTION, INVOLVING MORE SUBSTANTIAL VIOLATION AND RETALIATION, WHICH WOULD REQUIRE AND JUSTIFY RECOURSE TO WASHINGTON.

4. IN VIEW OF YOUR JUDGEMENT THAT THE ENEMY MAY MOVE PROMPTLY AFTER A BOMBING CESSATION FOR A CEASE FIRE, WE TRUST YOU ARE DESIGNING AND PREPARING TO RECOMMEND A CEASE FIRE PROPOSAL HIGHLY ADVANTAGEOUS TO OUR SIDE WHICH WE WOULD PUT INTO NEGOTIATION IF SUCH A PROPOSITION WERE PUT TO US.]

SERVICE SET

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SERVICE SET

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/C

REVIEWED BY W.V. H DATE AUG 1 1985

RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE

13 AUTH. REASON(S)

ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐

DECLASSIFIED ☒ RELEASABLE ☒ IN PART 1968 OCT

RELEASE DENIED ☐ ED 12356 7.3(a)(4)

PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

CLASS
OO YEKADS
DE YEKADL 133 2681433
O 141425Z ZFF-4
FM SAIGON
TO WHITE HOUSE
ZEM

SECRET EYES ONLY 141245Z OCT 68

FM AMBASSADOR BUNKER AND GENERAL ABRAMS 284

TO THE WHITE HOUSE, EYES ONLY WALT ROSTOW

REF: CAP 82572

WE HAVE, OF COURSE, BEEN EXAMINING THIS LATEST MOVE OF HANOI AND THE SOVIETS FROM EVERY CONCEIVABLE POINT OF VIEW, INCLUDING THE FOUR QUESTION AREAS POSED IN YOUR MESSAGE. SOME OF OUR VIEWS ARE IN SAIGON'S 40117, BUT WE HAVE TAKEN ANOTHER CLOSE LOOK AS A RESULT OF YOUR TELEGRAM.

HANOI'S INTENTIONS

2. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY IN ADVANCE WHETHER HANOI WANTS SERIOUSLY TO NEGOTIATE A COMPROMISE, OR IS USING THIS LATEST MOVE ONLY AS A MEANS OF GETTING THE BOMBING STOPPED KNOWING THAT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO RESUME LATER, EITHER BY THE PRESIDENT OR HIS SUCCESSOR. ONE CAN ARGUE THAT HANOI MAY HAVE BOTH THESE OBJECTIVES IN MIND, AND THEY WILL MOVE IN WHICHEVER DIRECTION THEY THINK HOLDS OUT THE GREATEST HOPE OF GAIN FOR THEM.

3. WE THINK HANOI'S DECISION TO AGREE TO THE GVN ENTERING THE DISCUSSIONS IS OF THE GREATEST SIGNIFICANCE. IT SUGGESTS THAT HANOI HAS ABANDONED ALL HOPE OF A MILITARY VICTORY OR OF A UNILATERAL US WITHDRAWAL BY THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION. IF THIS IS SO, HANOI'S ALTERNATIVES ARE TO TRY TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT ON A BASIS MOST FAVORABLE TO THEM, OR TO RETURN TO PROTRACTED GUERRILLA WARFARE. ON BALANCE WE THINK THAT AT THE OUTSET AT LEAST HANOI WILL ENTER THESE NEGOTIATIONS WITH SERIOUS PURPOSE.

4. WE THINK THEIR NEGOTIATING OBJECTIVES WILL BE:

- A. CEASE-FIRE IN PLACE;
- B. MUTUAL WITHDRAWAL OF FORCES; AND
- C. COALITION GOVERNMENT.

5. WE THINK THEY WILL PUT THESE FORWARD EARLY IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. ALL THREE ARE SIMPLE CONCEPTIONS WITH STRONG PROPAGANDA FEATURES FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW, AND EACH IS DESIGNED TO GIVE US TROUBLE. SINCE WE ARE NOT GOING TO AGREE ON SIMPLE CONCEPTIONS SUCH AS THESE, WE MUST EXPECT EXTENDED NEGOTIATIONS WHILE WE HAMMER OUT SOLUTIONS WHICH ARE ACCEPTABLE TO US AND THE GVN. WE WILL BE WORKING UP PROPOSALS TO HANDLE EACH OF THESE, AND ASSUME WASHINGTON AND PARIS ARE DOING LIKEWISE.

6. OUR RELATIVE BARGAINING POSITIONS, ASSUMING THE WIDER TALKS START IN A WEEK OR SO, WILL BE IMPORTANT. BOTH OUR SHORT AND LONG TERM BARGAINING POSITIONS ARE STRONG. THE VC/NVA CAN DO LITTLE

~~SECRET~~

EYES ONLY

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WHCA

SANITIZED

REVIEW

REMOVED:
transferred to O/PADRC
Cat. B - Transferred to O/PADRC.
with additional actions
controlled by 2/3
Cat. C - Certain and probably
retained by 2/3

Reviewed by:

Date:

SANITIZED

Authority NLS 85-08

By ing, NARS, Date 3-27-86

DAMAGE WITH THEIR REGULAR FORCES DURING THE NEXT TWO OR THREE MONTHS WHICH THEY NEED FOR REST AND RESUPPLY. AS FOR THE LONG TERM HANOI THREW EVERYTHING THEY COULD INTO THIS YEAR'S OFFENSIVES, AND FAILED. WE DO NOT YET SEE HOW THEY CAN MAKE A GREATER EFFORT OR EVEN A COMPARABLE ONE AGAIN.

7. ON THE OTHER HAND THEY ARE STRONGLY ENTRENCHED IN THE VC CONTROLLED AREAS, WHERE THEY CONTROL ABOUT 3700 HAMLETS, AND ANOTHER 3900 HAMLETS ARE CONTESTED. WE WILL HAVE TO PAY A PRICE TO EXTEND OUR POWER INTO THESE AREAS, FOR THE VC ARE GOOD AT GUERRILLA AND IRREGULAR FORCE FIGHTING ON THEIR HOME GROUNDS.

HOWEVER IT IS WHAT WE MUST NOW DO. FIGHTING DEFENSIVELY, THEY WILL TRY TO MAKE ANY EXTENSION OF OUR CONTROL AS COSTLY AS POSSIBLE FOR US. THIS IS WHERE THEY WILL CONCENTRATE THEIR MILITARY EFFORT AS THE NEGOTIATIONS START. AS WE PUSH AGAINST THEM IN THESE AREAS, WHICH WE MEAN TO DO, THEY WILL RESIST AND THERE WILL BE HEAVY FIGHTING OF THE AMBUSH AND GUERRILLA TYPE. WE MUST ALSO EXPECT SABOTAGE AND GUERRILLA TYPE ACTIVITY IN THE CITIES.

8. MEANTIME THEY WILL BE NEGOTIATING IN ALL SERIOUSNESS FOR AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE OF THE THREE OBJECTIVES LISTED IN PARA 4.

WE DO NOT THINK IT POSSIBLE TO FIX IN ADVANCE, EVEN IN ROUGH TERMS, THE LENGTH OF THE INTERVAL THAT SHOULD BE ALLOWED BEFORE WE CONSIDER WHETHER HANOI IS SERIOUS OR WHETHER A BOMBING RESUMPTION IS CALLED FOR. WE THINK WE SHOULD HAVE A PRETTY CLEAR PICTURE OF HANOI'S INTENTIONS IN A MONTH OR TWO, PARTICULARLY IF THE NEGOTIATING MEETINGS ARE FREQUENT. BY THE END OF THE YEAR, WE SHOULD ALSO HAVE A PRETTY GOOD IDEA OF THE MORALE OF VC/NVA FORCES AS WELL AS OUR ABILITY TO MOVE INTO AND ESTABLISH OURSELVES IN THE CONTESTED AREAS.

9. OUR MAIN PROBLEMS AS WE SEE THEM WILL BE TO JUSTIFY TO THE CONGRESS AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE OUR UNWILLINGNESS TO AGREE TO A CEASE-FIRE IN PLACE AND OUR OPPOSITION TO A COALITION, OR, TO PUT IT IN ANOTHER WAY, JUSTIFYING TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC FURTHER CASUALTIES WHILE WE NEGOTIATE FOR A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF OUR ENORMOUS EFFORT HERE.

1. WE BELIEVE HERE THAT 1968 - - HOWEVER DIFFICULT IT WAS FOR US - - HAS BEEN A DISASTER FOR HANOI. WE MUST CONVINCE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THAT THE TIDE HAS TURNED IN OUR FAVOR, AND WE CAN ONLY DO THIS IF WE CAN SHOW PROGRESS IN MOVING INTO CONTESTED AREAS, RISING DEFECTIONS FROM THE COMMUNIST RANKS, HEAVY COMMUNIST CASUALTIES, COMPARATIVELY LIGHT CASUALTIES ON OUR SIDE, WITHDRAWAL OF SOME AMERICAN UNITS, THE TAKEOVER OF MORE AND MORE OF THE WAR BY ARVN, ETC. THAT WILL ALSO BE CONVINCING TO HANOI, AND WILL DETERMINE THEIR NEGOTIATING TACTICS.

2. WHEN THE GVN JOINS THE TALKS, WE MUST INSIST ON CLOSED SESSIONS, OR CLOSED ALONG WITH OPEN SESSIONS, OTHERWISE WE CANNOT REGARD THE TALKS AS SERIOUS. GIVEN THE COMPLEXITY OF THE PROBLEMS AND THE STRONG BARGAINING CARDS THAT EACH SIDE HOLDS, WITH THE BEST WILL IN THE WORLD, WE THINK IT IS LIKELY TO TAKE SOME MONTHS TO PRODUCE SOLUTIONS AND AGREEMENTS, AND INDEED WE MAY BE IN NEGOTIATIONS FOR A VERY LONG TIME.

SANITIZED

13. FOLLOWING IS OUR REPLY TO YOUR QUESTION 2.

A. MAINTAINING THE MORALE, FIGHTING SPIRIT AND MOMENTUM OF US AND ARVN FORCES IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL. DIRECTIVES HAVE GONE OUT ON THE US AND CVN SIDE TO INTENSIFY OUR OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS AGAINST INFRASTRUCTURE GUERRILLAS AND LOCAL FORCES IN ORDER TO EXTEND GOVERNMENT CONTROL, AT THE SAME TIME MAINTAINING UNRELENTING PRESSURE AGAINST HIS MAIN FORCES. IT IS AN OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE ENEMY "SYSTEM."

B. WE ARE PLANNING NOW THE FORM AND SHAPE OF A MESSAGE TO THE TROOPS IF AN ANNOUNCEMENT IS MADE. THIS MESSAGE WILL BE CRITICALLY IMPORTANT TO ESTABLISHING A POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE. IT WILL BE TIED TO THE RESULTS OF OUR OPERATIONS SO FAR AND THE OFFENSIVE DESCRIBED ABOVE. WE WILL DISSEMINATE IT IN A MASSIVE EFFORT.

C. WE ARE COMPLETELY CONFIDENT THAT THE MORALE, FIGHTING SPIRIT AND MOMENTUM CAN BE SUSTAINED.

14. FOLLOWING IS GENERAL ABRAMS REPLY TO YOUR THIRD QUESTION ON THE CONTINGENCY OF ENEMY VIOLATION OF THE DMZ. THE BASIC RULES OF ENGAGEMENT SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

A. EVERY COMMANDER WILL RETAIN THE INHERENT RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY TO CONDUCT OPERATIONS FOR THE SELF-DEFENSE OF HIS FORCES.

B. IN CASE OF ATTACK BY FIRE OR GROUND ATTACKS BY SMALL UNITS (UP TO A BATTALION IN SIZE) ACROSS THE DEMARCATION LINE, COMUSMACV SHOULD HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT A TIMELY AND ADEQUATE RESPONSE AGAINST THE ATTACKING FORCE, TO INCLUDE DESTRUCTION OF ENEMY FORCES PENETRATING ACROSS THE LINE. NO US GROUND FORCES WOULD CROSS THE LINE WITHOUT SPECIFIC ORDERS FROM THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY. (COMMENT: IT IS ENVISAGED THAT SMALL GROUND PROBES WOULD BE COUNTERACTED BY RESPONSE IN KIND, BUT OF DECISIVE SUPERIORITY.)

C. ENEMY ARTILLERY FIRE WOULD BE RESPONDED TO WITH HEAVY COUNTER-BATTERY FIRE AND AIR ATTACK UNTIL ENEMY WEAPONS ARE SILENCED. IN CASE SAM'S ARE FIRED AT OUR AIRCRAFT WE WOULD DESTROY HIS SAM INSTALLATIONS AND IMMEDIATE SUPPORTING FACILITIES.

D. IN CASE OF SUBSTANTIAL OR GENERAL ATTACKS ACROSS THE DEMARCATION LINE BY GROUND (INCLUDING ARTILLERY) OR AIR ACTION REQUIRING RESPONSE GOING BEYOND LOCAL ACTION, AUTHORIZATION OF HIGHEST AUTHORITY WOULD BE SOUGHT IMMEDIATELY FOR SUCH ACTION, INCLUDING RESUMPTION OF THE BOMBARDMENT OF NVN.

~~SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

A4

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Eyes only

~~SECRET~~

EYES ONLY

SERVICE SET

NNNN

Aliyah Kelly
Dec. 27, 84

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SERVICE SET

OUTGOING TELEGRAM Department of State

INDICATE: ☐ COLLECT
☐ CHARGE TO

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Classification

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map

FOR OC/T USE ONLY

Origin

ACTION: Amembassy PARIS

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ FLASH 17112

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Info:

TODEL 1262

STATE 254715

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: NLS 85-08

NODIS/HARVAN DOUBLE PLUS By up, NARS, Date 3-27-86

LITERALLY EYES ONLY FOR AMBASSADORS HARRIMAN AND VANCE

1. We would like your views on an urgent basis on the following proposed guidelines for your next private meeting.

Following further word from us, we would request you to
2. ~~XXXXXX~~ seek private meeting soonest with ~~XXXXXX~~
verbatim

Thuy to deliver/ following ~~XXXXXX~~ oral message:

BEGIN MESSAGE

(1) Repeatedly in these conversations we have stated our view that the unconditional cessation of bombing could take place and be maintained only if serious talks take place and if circumstances are maintained consistent with serious talks.

(2) At the last meeting you asked a question. Our response is: ¹⁰ We are prepared, depending on your response

GP 1

Drafted by: The Under Secretary/

Tel. Ext:

Telegraphic transmission and classification approved by:

The Secretary

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EA - Mr. Bundy

WH - WWRostow

S/S - BHRoad

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~~to this representation as a whole,~~ to order the cessation of bombing and all other acts involving the use of force against the territory of the DRV if you agree to begin serious talks the next day in which representatives of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam will participate on our side.

(3) As we said on October 11, it is also absolutely essential that there be no misunderstanding on the following two points, which ~~do not constitute a basis for~~
~~describing the situation following a~~ cessation of all bombardment in which the President's ability to maintain that situation would be affected by certain ~~elements of the situation~~ facts of life.

(4) ^(v) The simple fact is that military activities in and
certain military activities near the DMZ would not be
consistent with serious talks, such as firing of artillery,
rockets and mortars from, across and within the DMZ; movements
of armed forces from, across and within the DMZ; and the
massing or movement of forces near the DMZ in a manner
threatening to the other side. These restraints would,
of course, be observed by both sides.

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(3) (5) The other ^{simple} fact is that indiscriminate armed attacks against major cities in South Vietnam would not be consistent with ~~xx~~ such talks. END MESSAGE

3. We have used the phrase that would permit reconnaissance, which they may question. [We believe it important ~~xx~~ that they have ^{clear} ~~any understanding~~ understanding that we will in fact continue a limited program of unarmed reconnaissance after the bombing stops. Our own research into the record here indicates that we have repeatedly used the general terms "bombing" or "bombardment," and that starting with the Vance/Lau conversation of July (Paris 18012, paragraph 4) we spelled out repeatedly the longer and more exact term "bombing and all other acts involving the use of force". In an ~~xxxxxxx~~ earlier conversation, Lau had asked about "other acts of war" and Vance had said that we would have to discuss what this involved at a later point. So far as we can tell, the issue has not come up in any of the private talks since September 7. Thus, as we see it, we could be faced with the possibility of misunderstanding or purported misunderstanding with the

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North Vietnamese. Thus, if we were to get into a script of a formal session at which the inclusion of the GVN was agreed, while reconnaissance continued then or thereafter, Hanoi might ~~have taken~~ ^a ~~position which it could~~ claim/breach of faith. Therefore, ^{we} ~~we~~ think ~~as~~ ^{should emphasize} in the message ~~that you must repeat several times~~ the longer formula/ "and other acts involving the use of force." Beyond this point, there are several alternatives:

a. You could volunteer a listing of examples of such "other acts." This would include naval, air, and artillery bombardment and also such acts as commando raids, which have been included in past Hanoi listings. It would omit, but without initially calling attention to it, unarmed reconnaissance. [If the North Vietnamese then specifically raise the question of unarmed reconnaissance, you would state that both sides would be expected to take necessary measures to verify the state of affairs, and that in practice

we could not possibly be satisfied that we knew the facts unless we conducted limited and ^{discreet} ~~unarmed~~ unarmed reconnaissance.

(FYI/ SecDef and JCS will require some low level flights) END FYI)

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Such reconnaissance clearly does not involve ^{it could not possibly be regarded} the use of force, and in the circumstances/ ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ as an act of war. Hence, we would expect that it would continue.

b. Without ~~volunteering~~ volunteering a list of examples, you would

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be prepared to respond to any North Vietnamese/^{probing}~~analysis~~ of the
of phrase along the same lines as in (a.) above. In the
absence of a probe, we would rely on repetition of the
phrase as establishing the point.

c. As a supplement to (b.), we might go concurrently to the
Soviets in order both to list the acts we expected to stop,
and expressly to indicate that we would not stop unarmed
reconnaissance.

We would appreciate your judgment among these possibilities.

4. We would also appreciate your views on the time schedule
that we envisage. The GVN is now on board and we ^{may be} ~~are~~ going out
whenever we have your comments on these draft instructions,
today to ~~board~~ the TCCs/ Hopefully they will be onboard
^{this}
by early/week. If it turns out that we can nail down our
agreements and understandings with the DRV in one private
session the cessation of bombing could follow soon thereafter.
We would appreciate your judgment as to the possible need for
more than one meeting to wrap up the arrangements.

The maintenance of total security, to mention but one factor,
argues for moving as rapidly as possible, and we see no need
to aim at one day of the week rather than another, since we
could always hold a special plenary session the day after the

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cessation in order to formalize and make public the inclusion of the GVN.

5. Obviously requirements of secrecy would preclude special GVN delegation from Saigon at first plenary meeting following cessation but there could be token representation drawn from Vietnamese observer delegation. This seems to us desirable since it publicly nails down GVN presence. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

~~XX~~

announced that the company had been selected to provide the

END

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NODIS

Sept. 24, 1968

~~SECRET/HARVAN/PLUS~~

Copy of SAIGON 38599 from Ambassador Bunker

SANITIZED

Subject: GVN Participation in Negotiations

Authority NLS 85-08

By ing, DASS, Date 8-26-86

672

(Note: Paras. 1-10 of this message were in finished form and about to be sent on Sept. 22 when the reports of the 4th private meeting were received. I have decided to send it in its original form rather than recast it in the light of the latest developments, for most of its contents are still relevant.)

1. I do not, repeat not, know the latest high level thinking on a total cessation of bombing in the light of the Sept. 15 private meeting, but a variety of factors and my instinct suggest to me that we may be re-examining our present stance and possibly make a decision on relatively short notice to suspend all bombing in an effort to move into substantive talks and test Hanoi's willingness to engage in "serious negotiations." If that is the train of events, ~~I want Washington to have my views as you re-examine this matter.~~

2. I assume in this cable that Hanoi will not abandon its stand that it will make no, repeat no, commitments or accept any conditions as a quid pro quo for cessation, and that ~~we may proceed unilaterally on the basis of assumptions which include an implied acceptance by Hanoi.~~

3. As I read the play of exchanges in the private talks and other material I have seen on this subject, I gather that ~~the minimum key assumptions we would make clear to Hanoi in advance of a total bombing stop would be:~~

- A. ~~The cessation of North Vietnamese military use or abuse of the DMZ.~~
- B. ~~The GVN presence at the negotiations.~~
- C. ~~And, presumably, we would also say that a renewed rise in infiltration or attack on the cities once "serious negotiations" start would also endanger these discussions.~~

4. If this is the course that we decide to follow, ~~the issue that gives me the greatest concern is getting the GVN into the talks if Hanoi does not, repeat not, agree in advance to this and tries to make it an agenda item, and possibly a low priority one. I see us bogged down in an interminable discussion about the GVN presence or where on the agenda this subject will be placed. I can see nothing but trouble of the most serious kind here if we allow this to happen.~~

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5. ~~GVN suspicion of us and our intentions, which is now quiescent, will again be aroused. Thieu is not likely to go along with a total cessation unless he knows in advance that he will be in on the consequent talks, and he will have to differ with us publicly if the GVN are not in on them. Once opened, the breach could widen rapidly, affecting unity and morale in South Vietnam and endangering the trust and confidence in us which we have taken so much pains to build. On the other hand, even if we could persuade Thieu to agree to cessation without GVN participation firmly tied down, he will be under the heaviest attack here. The strains on our relations will be very severe, Thieu's position, prestige, and ability to hold the country together could be threatened, and the Communists would have a field day feeding the suspicions and promoting the strains and working to destroy Thieu.~~

6. ~~It seems to me, therefore, that in stating our assumptions, we should not just say that the GVN must take part in serious discussions, but that we will bring them into the negotiations from the start. In effect, if we are unable to get Hanoi's agreement in advance to GVN participation, then we should unilaterally establish the "our-side, your-side" procedure for the "serious negotiations" by means of assumption.~~

7. ~~If at that point they balk and say they will not take part in joint meetings on this basis, it is clear, at least to me, that they have no, repeat no, serious intentions of negotiating once the bombing stops. I fear they will treat total cessation as a capitulation by us, and then move on to their next rigid positions which may be:~~

- A. That the US must stop its aggression against the South and withdraw, and
- B. Hanoi and the NLF will only talk to the US, Should this eventuate we shall be endlessly arguing the question of GVN representation after the bombing cessation. On this point I share the views expressed in INR's intelligence note, "'Where does Hanoi go from here" and especially paras. 9 and 10 (ref. c).

8. ~~I most strongly urge that we hold firmly to the position that GVN participation is a must. I continue to maintain that Hanoi is in trouble. It has four alternatives available to it, i.e., another "spectacular offensive" accompanied by a spectacular defeat, rolling attacks such as we have had since August 18 with nothing but continuous losses to show for them; retreat to protracted~~

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guerrilla warfare because they cannot achieve a breakthrough in the face of our growing strength and their heavy losses; or negotiations for the best possible terms while they are still in a good bargaining position. I think they will choose the last, and before long, if we hold firm.

9. My final thought is that we must inform the GVN and our allies in advance of making a final decision and announcement on total cessation. They would view with the gravest disquiet a bombing cessation without having nailed down GVN participation.

10. Gen. Abrams, who has seen this message and concurs, has asked me to add the following additional observation from the purely military viewpoint. He considers that as between restraints in the DMZ and giving the GVN a place in the negotiations from the beginning, the latter is more important. He has commented separately on the military risks and costs of a bombing halt based on "assumptions" about enemy behavior in the DMZ and feels that if necessary he can cope with these risks and cost even though we have to pay a price, but if the GVN does not, repeat not, have a role in the negotiations from the time they start, this would strike at something that is basic to our whole military effort here, namely, the cooperative relationship between the US and South Vietnamese military leaders and forces. If this is shaken, it could have not only the serious political consequences which I mentioned above, but could jeopardize the very basis of our military effort here. I wish to associate myself with this assessment.

11. My comments on latest developments: Since writing the foregoing I have received and studied references D-G and am pleased with the strong stand we are taking on GVN participation. I would have preferred the phrase this "would" be a major factor in facilitating a decision to stop the bombing, instead of "could." But I am not carping if this represents our basic condition. It is the touchstone of all our efforts and sacrifice here, and if we persist in holding to this position and do not appear too anxious, Hanoi will have no choice but to accept it.

12. This message goes along with our efforts to find the key to induce Hanoi to move into serious discussions, but I do not want to leave the impression that I would concur in any cessation that leaves in doubt GVN participation. I am convinced that Hanoi cannot go on much longer on its present course.

~~SECRET~~/HARVAN/PLUS

-4-

Its only hope now of saving something from the wreckage of its design to take South Vietnam by force is American policy and American opinion. If we cave in on GVN participation they will only read this as a sign that we are ready to sacrifice the GVN, and it will harden every one of their positions once the talks start. If they cave on this, there is a good prospect that, however difficult, we will have a serious negotiation whose outcome will be compromises acceptable to US and to the GVN.*

BUNKER

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~~SECRET~~/HARVAN/PLUS

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