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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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November 21, 1961

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT

FROM: *WWR*
WWR

SUBJECT: Viet-Nam Status Report.

There is attached the first status report on recent decisions with respect to Viet-Nam. This memorandum is designed to supplement that status report by providing additional clarifying information, covering subjects not covered in the report and bringing it up to date where additional information has been received.

The Military Situation. There has been continuing deterioration, but no major change, in the military situation. The crisis described in the Taylor Mission Report has not been reversed. There has been a recent step-up of Viet Cong activity in the Delta and GVN analysis suggests that the VC plans to broaden the area of Zone D north of Saigon. Though the Government has taken some military initiatives, its military operations have produced no significant results. There is one bit of evidence indicating that the Cambodians may have tightened their border somewhat and that the VC are raiding Cambodian border villages in retaliation.

Casualty rates remain at the higher level inaugurated in September, when the VC stepped up their offensive.

The Flood Situation. Each new report on the flood emphasizes the fact that its effects will not be so severe as had been feared initially. However, estimates of rice requirements which have fluctuated up and down have now been firmly estimated at the relatively high figure of 220,000 tons. Action to deal with this problem is reported in the status report. Meanwhile, Diem has established his own flood relief and reconstruction organization under an official who is well regarded by the American Embassy.

SECRET

SECRET

-2-

U. S. Economic Aid. AID in mid-October approved a level of \$140 million for non-project aid (commercial imports) for FY 1962. Because of the floods and General Taylor's visit, this figure was never given to the Vietnamese. The Ambassador on November 16 requested that this level be increased to \$160 million on the basis of new requirements created by the flood, particularly the need for rice. Today he has sent a new message to the personal attention of Fowler Hamilton requesting expedited action on this request on the grounds that it would be of great help in his current negotiations with Diem and is crucial to Vietnamese action to carry out exchange reform and other measures which were agreed in connection with the Staley Report. The request is receiving urgent consideration in State and AID.

The Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps. The item on this subject at the bottom of page 2 of the status report actually deals only with the Civil Guard. We have not yet reached agreement with the Vietnamese Government on a plan for the training of the Self Defense Corps. The Government rejected a MAAG proposal that members of the Corps be trained in the Civil Guard training centers on the grounds that such action would leave a security vacuum in the provinces. The GVN proposed instead to bring 3 to 5 thousand Nationalist Chinese military to Viet-Nam to provide "on-the-spot" training. We are planning to make a counter-proposal for training of the Corps at thirty provincial training centers.

The Geneva Accords. As anticipated, we are already having some difficulties dealing with questions from newsmen and others on the relationship between our actions and the Geneva Accords. The problem has been contained for the moment, but can be expected to become more difficult as additional large items of military equipment are delivered.

New Management of the Surete. The Embassy is seizing upon the opportunities provided by change in leadership of the Surete. It is planning to propose development of a "National Communist Party Penetration Service" with CIA support down to the provincial level and an improved police program with the support of the USOM.

SECRET

SECRET

-3-

Organizational Questions. General Taylor has been consulting with General Lemnitzer on the question of organization of U. S. military activities in Viet-Nam. The question of Washington organization for implementation of the action program is under consideration between State and Defense in consultation with General Taylor.

Weed Killer. You will be receiving papers from Defense and State soon raising the question of whether we should support the use of a weed killer to attack crops in the plateau area on which the VC feed and to clear jungle paths, notably for an attack on Zone D. Your decision is required because this is a kind of chemical warfare.

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