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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

July 6, 1962

*(Taken from Pres
Week-end reading
ltr 7/6/62)*

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Mr. President:

The attached message from CIA sums up very well the whole Lao-South Vietnam infiltration problem which I mentioned to you briefly yesterday.

As I told you, the military on the spot (General Harkins) and State agree with these estimates. They also agree in denying that either of them was responsible for the backgrounder that produced the story. However, it is clear from paragraph one of this message that some American in the Kontum area did talk to the UPI correspondent. Both the military and State now realize very well that this is the kind of thing they better not do again.

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Attachment

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DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6
NLK 99-54
By *MCP* NARA, Date *1/01*

INCOMING MESSAGE

THE WHITE HOUSE
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16.

3527/LAD

5 JULY 1962
DATE

PRIORITY

FROM: CIA

TO : WHITE HOUSE

INFO :

CITE :

ATTN: MR. KAYSEN

THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM CIA STATION IN SAIGON RECEIVED IN WASHINGTON AS IN 23562 IS IN RESPONSE TO THE REQUEST MADE ON 4 JULY BY MR. KAYSEN TO MR. FENDIG OF CIA CONCERNING THE TRUMBULL STORY IN 4 JULY NEW YORK TIMES:

"1. THE CIA STATION, SAIGON, HAS MADE EXTENSIVE CHECK IN EFFORT DISCOVER SOURCES OF FIGURES AND INSPIRATION FOR SPECULATIONS IN TRUMBULL ARTICLE, BUT ALL WE HAVE ABLE FIND OUT WAS THAT FIGURE OF 8,000 TO 9,000 RECENT INFILTRATORS ORIGINALLY FILED BY UPI CORRESPONDENT ON BASIS BRIEFINGS HE RECEIVED FROM UNIDENTIFIED SOURCES IN KONTUM DURING RECENT VISIT. TRUMBULL PRESUMABLY PICKED UP FIGURE FROM UPI REPORT, TIED IT IN WITH HIS OWN PRECONCEPTIONS TO FASHION WHAT SEEMS TO US A HIGHLY EXAGGERATED AND SPECULATIVE REPORT.

"2. THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE INDICATION FROM INFO AVAILABLE TO US HERE THAT TO DATE THERE HAS ACTUALLY BEEN ANY MASS TRANSFER OF PAVN

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ELEMENTS FROM LAOS TO SOUTH VIETNAM. ALTHOUGH THIS ALWAYS POSSIBILITY AND IS OF COURSE SOURCE SERIOUS CONCERN GVN, SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT BULK OF PAVN ELEMENTS ACCEPTED AS BEING CURRENTLY DEPLOYED IN LAOS ARE BELIEVED BE LOCATED EITHER ALONG ROUTE 7 OR IN NORTHERN LAOS.

THEIR REDEPLOYMENT INTO SOUTH VIETNAM WOULD SEEM POSE AT LEAST AS MANY DIFFICULTIES AS INFILTRATION FRESH ELEMENTS DIRECTLY FROM NORTH VIETNAM VIA LAOS. MOREOVER MOST THESE UNITS PROBABLY COMPOSED NORTHERNERS, WHO WHILE PERHAPS SUITABLE FOR OPERATIONS IN NORTHERN LAOS WOULD BE FAR LESS SUITABLE FOR SOUTH VIETNAM THAN LARGE POOL REGROUPED SOUTHERNERS MANY OF WHOM INCORPORATED INTO 305TH, 324TH AND 338TH DIVISIONS.

"3. RE TRUMBULL'S SPECULATION ON "REPORTED PLAN" FOR "LIBERATED AREA," THIS OF COURSE SOMETHING WHICH MAY EVENTUALLY MATERIALIZE; HOWEVER, HANOI'S CURRENT PROPAGANDA STANCE CONTAINS NO HINT OF EARLY ESTABLISHMENT RIVAL GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH NOR IS THERE ANY SUGGESTION OF THIS IN OTHER REPORTING ON SUBJECT. STATION INCLINED THINK EARLY MOVE THIS DIRECTION WOULD BE ILL-TIMED FROM COMMIE STANDPOINT, COMING AS IT WOULD ON HEELS OF ICC DECISION ON SUBVERSION, ESTABLISHMENT OF LAOS COALITION AND IMPENDING 14-NATION GENEVA AGREEMENT ON LAOS. QUESTION SETTING UP RIVAL GOVT MAY WELL HAVE BEEN SUBJECT CONVERSATION BETWEEN HO CHI MINH AND RUSSIANS AT MOSCOW, BUT WE TEND TO DOUBT RUSSIANS WOULD BE VERY KEEN ON ITS EARLY ESTABLISHMENT SINCE IT WOULD VIRTUALLY FORCE THEM PROVIDE OPEN AID TO

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VC, THUS LEADING TO ESCALATION IN TERMS OF CONFLICT HERE WHICH WE WOULD NOT THINK SOVIETS AT THIS JUNCTURE PREPARED ACCEPT.

"4. RE ESTIMATE RECENT INFILTRATIONS WHICH TRUMBULL ATTRIBUTED TO GVN, THE CIA STATION IS UNABLE ASCERTAIN WHAT ELEMENT GVN GAVE HIM FIGURE, BUT TOTAL CONSIDERABLY IN EXCESS WHAT MACV CARRYING. OF POSSIBLE INTEREST IS FOLLOWING MACV ESTIMATE MONTHLY FLOW INFILTRATIONS FROM JUNE 1961 UNTIL PRESENT: FROM JUNE TO DEC 1961, 500-1000 PER MONTH; FROM JAN TO APRIL 1962, 100-200 PER MONTH; MAY AND JUNE, 800-1000. ESTIMATE BASED ON ANALYSIS CERTAIN CIA REPORTS (MAINLY FROM ARVN G-2 REPRESENTATIVES IN LIAISON AT SAVANNAKHET WITH FAR G-2), ON-THE-SPOT CONVERSATIONS IN PLEIKU WITH II CORPS INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS AND THE MAAG ADVISOR THERE, AND ESTIMATES GVN JOINT GENERAL STAFF J-2. ALTHOUGH MACV J-2 READILY AGREES HARD INFO ON SUBJECT DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN, ITS ESTIMATE APPARENTLY MADE ONLY AFTER CONSIDERABLE STUDY OF PROBLEM AND IS PROBABLY FAR CLOSER TO TRUTH THAN CONSIDERABLY HIGHER GVN ESTIMATES."

CIA HEADQUARTERS COMMENT:

WE BELIEVE THE FIGURES USED BY THE NEW YORK TIMES ARE GROSSLY EXAGGERATED THOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF INCREASING INFILTRATION SINCE EARLY MAY. EVEN THESE REPORTS ARE TENUOUS ALTHOUGH THEY DO SUGGEST SOME MOVEMENT IS TAKING PLACE ALONG THE TRAILS. THERE HAS

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BEEN NO CONFIRMATION THAT NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS HAVE BEGUN WITHDRAWING FROM LAOS. WHILE WE BELIEVE THERE WILL BE SOME COVERT WITHDRAWAL OF NORTH VIETNAMESE FROM LAOS FOLLOWING AN AGREEMENT AT GENEVA AND THAT INFILTRATION INTO SOUTH VIETNAM PROBABLY WILL BE ACCELERATED, WE DO NOT THINK THAT THE BULK OF NORTH VIETNAMESE IN LAOS WOULD BE TRANSFERRED TO SOUTH VIETNAM. PAST EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE NORMALLY PUT INFILTRATORS THROUGH SPECIAL TRAINING AND INDOCTRINATION BEFORE SENDING THEM SOUTH.

DTG: 052150Z

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