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ORIGINAL

Vol. 1 OF 5

NATIONAL SECURITY  
Unauthorized Disclosure Subject  
to Criminal Sanctions

The United States Senate

R379

Report of Proceedings

INVENTORIED:  
2/22/77  
BC

Hearing held before

Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental  
Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities

*Desjard*  
*[Handwritten signatures]*

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Friday, June 20, 1975

Washington, D. C.

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EXECUTIVE SESSION

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Friday, June 20, 1975

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United States Senate,  
Select Committee to Study Governmental  
Operations with Respect to  
Governmental Activities,  
Washington, D. C.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:15 o'clock  
p.m., in Room S-407, The Capitol, Senator John Tower presiding.

Present: Senators Hart of Michigan, Huddleston, Mondale,  
Morgan, Tower (presiding), Mathias, Baker and Schweiker.

Also present: William Miller, Staff Director; Frederick  
A. O. Schwarz, Jr., Chief Counsel; Curtis R. Smothers, Minority  
Counsel; and Frederick Baron, Charles Kirbow, Burton Wides,  
Michael J. Madigan, William Bader, David Aaron and Patrick  
Shea, Professional Staff Members.

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PROCEEDINGS

(2:15 p.m.)

Senator Tower. The Committee will come to order.

Before we proceed to hear the witness, I think we should have a report from the team that went down to the White House this morning to examine some documents, and I believe they will report to us and have a recommendation on how the Committee should agree to handle this material, and shall I call on --

Senator Mondale. Howard has the notes.

Senator Tower. I call on Senator Baker.

Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, Bill Bader has the notes.

Senator Mondale. Well then, call on me. I can read them.

Senator Tower. Mr. Bader?

Mr. Bader. Thank you, Senator.

The documents that we reviewed briefly at the White House situation room were four different categories.

In the first category, there were copies of the so-called Mongoose files. These files contain minutes of the Special Group Augmented and copies of the rest of the Mongoose files, arranged in chronological order. And these holdings are from the files of the Executive Secretary of the 40 Committee and include the files of the Chairman and the Executive Secretary of the Special Group Augmented.

Also these trust files are turned over to the Chairman by General Lansdale after the group ceased functioning, that is,

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1 the Mongoose group. As I looked at them, there were about a  
2 hundred documents in this first group.

3 The second group of documents are CIA's Mongoose files,  
4 which we have already seen. There are some six files, and I  
5 assume these are the same files, and we have seen them. But of  
6 course, we didn't have a chance to go through them with any  
7 care.

8 The third group of files were the Rockefeller Commission  
9 papers and files on assassination, and that includes the summary  
10 of facts, the investigation of plans for the assassination of  
11 Castro and perhaps more than Castro, the other assassinations,  
12 Trujillo as well.

13 Mr. Madigan. Lumumba's in there and also a reference to  
14 Sukarno.

15 Mr. Baker. That is a some 80 or 90 page document which, as  
16 I say, is a summary of facts, and this was prepared by David  
17 Belin.

18 Senator Baker. It might be important to note here, Mr.  
19 Chairman, that the White House indicated to us that that summary  
20 was not a Rockefeller Commission document and did not necessarily  
21 represent the position of the Rockefeller Commission as such.

22 That is the way I interpret their language.

23 I get the impression that this may have been a summary that  
24 was not accepted for conclusion in the report, therefore there  
25 may be some conflict.

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1 Senator Morgan. It was prepared by whom?

2 Senator Baker. Belin, the Executive Director.

3 Mr. Bader. The last category, the fourth category, are  
4 some Special Group minutes, that is, a file, it is a tiny file,  
5 really, of assassinations and allegations, and these minutes  
6 were culled from Special Group meetings and they are highly  
7 selective in the sense that they are documents as they could  
8 find them in their search that related only to Cuba and it is  
9 clear that there is a great deal more to come in this category  
10 of the Special Group minutes. It was just on Cuba. There was  
11 nothing on the other assassinations.

12 Senator Schweiker. You mean more that you have not seen  
13 yet?

14 Mr. Bader. More that they have not put together as yet,  
15 or at least they have not made available to us, and those were  
16 the four categories.

17 It is a little hard to judge just how much work it will  
18 take to go through them. It is, I would say, somewhere around  
19 400 to 500 pages, perhaps.

20 Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, I would ask Fritz and Bill  
21 to monitor what I'm about to say next to make sure that I reflect  
22 it accurately.

23 There is a general uneasiness at the White House about  
24 letting us have these documents unrestricted, although pretty  
25 clearly they are committed to let us have them, under some

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1 circumstance.

2 It is also clear to me that some documents have not yet  
3 been located and supplied to us and that parts of some documents  
4 have been deleted. I think we probably can get that deleted  
5 information before very long.

6 The suggestion was made that we ask the White House to  
7 bring those documents up here by their own personnel on Monday  
8 so that we could use them to examine witnesses. If they care  
9 to keep someone here to retain technical possession of the  
10 documents, to take them back with them at the close of that day  
11 or any day on which we use them, they might do that, and that  
12 sooner or later we would have to find a way to utilize those  
13 documents, meaning to put certain documents in the record  
14 or to read them into the record or to supply copies.

15 Rod Hill seemed to think well of that idea. I told him  
16 that I would suggest it to Senator Tower and to the rest of  
17 the Committee, and hopefully Senator Tower or Senator Church  
18 would be back in touch with the White House to see if we can  
19 negotiate an agreement along those lines. I think we can. I  
20 think the White House will agree to that arrangement.

21 Senator Mondale. There are two points I would like to  
22 make.

23 Senator Tower. Fritz?

24 Senator Mondale. I think Hills was saying, from some of  
25 the documentation we looked at it was clear that we may not yet

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1 have all of the documents that we ought to look at, and I think  
2 they are looking for more documents. Things we read referred  
3 to things that were not there. So I don't think we can be  
4 satisfied yet that the full record is available for perusal.

5 The second thing is, in our quick look it is very apparent  
6 that we must have the documentation. I saw some which would  
7 have been very important in our questioning McCone, which may  
8 have helped him remember things. It was very central to it.

9 I think we wasted a couple of hours when it could have been  
10 done very quickly with one or two documents.

11 I saw, there were several other documents that immediately  
12 struck me as being essential to our work. I don't think we saw  
13 anything that was revolutionary or that filled in a lot of the  
14 central gaps.

15 Senator Tower. You didn't see anything that was sensitive  
16 to the extent that it might reflect on a foreign government,  
17 or something like that?

18 Senator Mondale. There might be stuff in there, honestly,  
19 I don't know. But just looking at our work --

20 Senator Tower. What you're saying, Fritz, is you don't  
21 think we need all of it, that we could select out some of it,  
22 is that it?

23 Senator Mondale. What I am saying is I think there is  
24 more available somewhere than we saw, and they said they are  
25 still looking. Hills said he wasn't satisfied that it was all

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1 there yet, and secondly, we've got to have it.

2 Senator Tower. Right.

3 Senator Mondale. And we need it for cross-examination and  
4 we need it --

5 Senator Tower. Well, the question is, do you need every-  
6 thing that you looked at today, or do you think --

7 Senator Mondale. I don't know. Some of the stuff we  
8 already have.

9 Mr. Bader. Some, we already have.

10 Senator Mondale. So we don't need that.

11 Senator Tower. Yes.

12 Senator Mondale. The other material, it struck me that  
13 I don't see what we have to lose by having most of it. I think  
14 most of it is historical.

15 Senator Baker. I think we ought to have all of it, John.  
16 The essence of the suggestion I tried to make was that we have  
17 physically present in this room all of it, and then we can decide  
18 how we use it and what parts of it.

19 Senator Huddleston. One question on the documents.

20 Is that just the material that the Rockefeller Commission  
21 has had?

22 Senator Baker. No, the Rockefeller Commission apparently  
23 has not had these NSC minutes.

24 Senator Mondale. They did not have the NSC minutes.

25 Mr. Schwarz. They asked for them and we were told about

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1 ten days ago that the White House refused to give it to the  
2 Rockefeller Commission for some reason.

3 Senator Baker. Tha's right.

4 Senator Mondale. The interesting thing, among other things,  
5 it tells you exactly who was at all of these meetings.

6 Senator Baker. That's remarkable, there's no doubt about  
7 who was there and in most cases who said what.

8 Senator Mondale. The heat was on, there's no doubt about  
9 that.

10 Senator Tower. You've heard Senator Baker's proposal.  
11 Is it the sense of the Committee that we should adopt that  
12 procedure for now, at least, for -- let's say, what is it,  
13 Monday that we want them up here?

14 Mr. Schwarz. Bundy is coming at 2:00 o'clock on Monday  
15 and we've set an opportunity to meet with him and go over and  
16 refresh his recollection and so forth. Are we entitled to have  
17 them for that purpose as well as the actual use of them at the  
18 hearing?

19 Senator Baker. My understanding is that there is to be no  
20 restriction on our use of them.

21 Senator Mondale. We not only need them, but we need them  
22 in a way that they're useful to us on cross-examination. Now, as  
23 I understand it, the staff will be down there this afternoon and  
24 maybe into tomorrow and the next day, for that matter.

25 Senator Tower. So the staff can sift through some of this?

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1 Mr. Schwarz. And digest it, and so forth.

2 Senator Mondale. And we should ask that the materials  
3 that are appropriate or relevant to the next witness be avail-  
4 able to us and that staff have them organized in order  
5 to help us.

6 Senator Baker. There is a point there I'd like to vary on a  
7 little.

8 I don't want to give the White House an opportunity to pick  
9 out of that stuff what they're going to send up here. I would  
10 like our request to be to send all of it, and then for us to  
11 decide here, with the White House concurrence, on how we use it,  
12 that is, do we read it into the record, do we photocopy it, or  
13 do they supply us a copy of it.

14 Let us make the essence of it that they send it here.

15 Senator Tower. The proposition by Senator Baker is that  
16 we ask them to bring the documents here, allow the bearer to  
17 be present while the documents are being used, so they maintain  
18 technical possession and take them back to the White House after  
19 we have used them in our session or subsequent sessions.  
20 Then we can determine at a later time what final disposition we  
21 make.

22 Is that correct, Howard?

23 Senator Baker. That's correct.

24 Senator Tower. I was not able to get Senator Church. He  
25 is off in the wilds of Idaho.

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1 Mr. Schwarz. I talked with him last night, and this is  
2 quite consistant with our conversation.

3 Senator Tower. I think this will be agreeable with him,  
4 but I told his secretary that if, for any reason, after he gets  
5 in touch with his office he does find it objectionable that I  
6 would reopen the matter in a subsequent meeting.

7 Senator Mondale. Just one question.

8 There would not be a White House staff person here during  
9 someone's testimony?

10 Mr. Schwarz. They'd sit outside the door.

11 Senator Mondale. I don't think he should be here as a  
12 monitor.

13 Senator Baker. I think that's a point we'll have to make  
14 clear. I agree with you, Fritz, he ought to be physically  
15 present, like guarding the door that we don't run off with it,  
16 but not here.

17 Senator Tower. And we would undertake that we're not going  
18 to xerox them or anything while he's sitting out there.

19 Is that agreed on by everybody? Is there any objection to  
20 that?

21 Then that is the way we will proceed.

22 Senator Baker. Mike Madigan makes a point that's well  
23 taken. It was Mike's understanding that Hill's was telling us  
24 there were certain other documents that he had already identified  
25 but had not yet reviewed and we ought to make sure that we get

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1 all of those as well.

2 Senator Tower. I think the problem down there is they do  
3 not have enough staff to get all of this stuff together, is that  
4 it?

5 Senator Baker. I think the problem is they do not want to  
6 be taken by surprise.

7 Senator Huddleston. They want to see it all first.

8 Senator Tower. They want to see it before it comes to us?

9 Senator Baker. I don't blame them.

10 Senator Tower. I understand Mr. Kissinger has some interest  
11 in seeing them.

12 Senator Mondale. I think that's why they don't have enough  
13 staff.

14 Senator Tower. Okay.

15 Is there anything else of a housekeeping nature to come  
16 up?

17 Senator Baker. I might say to the Committee, Mr. Chairman,  
18 that you conducted a most intriguing interview with Mr. Angleton  
19 yesterday.

20 Senator Tower. We did. In effect, we took a deposition  
21 from him in my office yesterday, and I think it was very  
22 illuminating, to say the least.

23 Senator Morgan. He looks the part.

24 Senator Baker. He sure does.

25 Senator Tower. So I would suggest to the Committee

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11  
1 the reading of that deposition. I think it would be worth your  
2 time.

3 Senator Baker and Senator Mathias were there also.

4 All right.

5 Mr. Kirbow?

6 Mr. Kirbow. Mr. Chairman, I think it would be helpful to  
7 the members if they know that when Mr. Conein is testifying that  
8 he has before him what he refers to as an afteraction report,  
9 in which both he and the Station Chief before Mr. ~~Smith~~ Mr. 06  
10 Richardson, John Richardson, compiled immediately after the coup  
11 took place in Saigon.

12 He is going to limit his testimony principally, since he  
13 has no personal knowledge of the Washington scene, to painting  
14 for the Committee, if you will, a picture of the events that  
15 transpired from early May of 1963 on through the time of the  
16 coup, and he will then be prepared to answer any questions,  
17 much as we did with Mr. Colby this morning.

18 Senator Tower. He wants to proceed in narrative form?

19 Mr. Kirbow. Yes.

20 Senator Tower. All right, we will proceed with Mr. Conein.

21 (Whereupon, at 2:27 o'clock p.m., the witness entered the  
22 hearing room.)  
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1 Senator Tower. Mr. Conein, thank you for coming today.  
2 We will be questioning you under oath today, so if you would  
3 raise your right hand, do you solemnly swear that the testimony  
4 you are about to give before this Committee is the truth, the  
5 whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

6 Mr. Conein. I do, sir.

7 Senator Tower. Counsel will advise you on your rights.

8 Mr. Kirbow. Please be seated.

9 Mr. Schwarz. Mr. Conein, just a couple of procedural  
10 matters.

11 You are aware that you have the right to counsel?

12 Mr. Conein. Right.

13 Mr. Schwarz. And if at any time you want to stop and  
14 obtain counsel in the middle of these proceedings you have  
15 that right as well?

16 Mr. Conein. Yes.

17 Mr. Schwarz. And of course you have all your constitutional  
18 rights including your rights under the Fifth Amendment, you  
19 understand that?

20 Mr. Kirbow will question you.

21 Senator Tower. Mr. Kirbow?

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1 TESTIMONY OF LUCIEN E. CONEIN

2 Mr. Kirbow. Mr. Conein, for the record would you please  
3 state your full name, your current address, and present  
4 occupation?

5 Mr. Conein. My name is Lucien E. Conein, C-o-n-e-i-n.  
6 I live at 1111 Ingleside -- I-n-g-l-e-s-i-d-e -- Avenue,  
7 McLean, Virginia.

8 I am employed by the Department of Justice Drug Enforcement  
9 Administration.

10 Mr. Kirbow. Thank you.

11 Mr. Conein, would you be good enough to give the Committee  
12 a brief synopsis of your background from the time you first  
13 became engaged in any government work, either military or  
14 civilian?

15 Mr. Conein. I enlisted in the Army in 1941, September of  
16 1941, and in 1943 I graduated from OCS in Fort Benning, Georgia.

17 At that time, I had been asked to volunteer for the Office  
18 of Strategic Services, which I did, and was sent to England for  
19 further training in the Special Operations Executive, which was  
20 an organization affiliated with the OSS under British Command.

21 I was parachuted behind the lines in France in 1944. In  
22 December, 1944 I returned to the United States and I was sent  
23 for training preparatory to going to the China, Burma, India  
24 theatre which I did in 1945.

25 In March of 1945, the French garrison in French Indochina

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1 had been attacked by the Japanese and I was asked to parachute  
2 into the area to recuperate elements of the French forces, to  
3 consolidate them, retrain them, go back into Indochina and to  
4 form a base for operations in the northern part of Indochina.

5 This I did and later on I was in Hanoi with the Viet Minh  
6 took over in 1945, and I stayed until 1946 when I came back to  
7 the United States and then I was sent to the SSU mission, which  
8 was the predecessor of the CIA, to Germany and I served in the  
9 SSU, the CIG and the CIA.

10 I left Germany in 1953, still in the military, where I  
11 became a desk chief at CIA, and in 1954 I was asked by Mr. Helms  
12 if I would go back to Vietnam, which I did, under the command of  
13 then-Colonel Edward G. Lansdale and I was assigned to North  
14 Vietnam.

15 I stayed there until the Viet Minh took over in October of  
16 1954. I then went to Haiphong, and in 1955 I came to Saigon.  
17 and at that time, the operation was to establish a viable  
18 government in Vietnam, the government of Ngo Dien Diem.

19 I remained until 1956 and in 1956 I asked to be relieved  
20 from the CIA so I could return to the military service. I had  
21 been up to that time, approximately 13 years as a military man  
22 with OSS, SSU, CIG and CIA.

23 I left and I joined the Special Forces in the Army and I  
24 served from '56 to '59. In 1959 I was assigned to the Assistant  
25 Chief of Staff for Intelligence of the U.S. Army and was sent to

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1 Iran where I served for two years.

2 I retired from the military in 1961 and returned to the  
3 CIA. I was sent to Vietnam in 1961 and I remained in Vietnam  
4 until August of 1967.

5 I left the CIA in 1968, July the 15th, retired from the  
6 CIA and military. I went in private business for a couple of  
7 years and in 1971 I worked as a consultant for the White House  
8 for approximately four months, four or five months.

9 I then was a consultant to the Bureau of Narcotics and  
10 Dangerous Drugs of the Department of Justice and I joined the  
11 DEA in 1973 and I am presently working for the DEA.

12 Mr. Kirbow. Directing your attention then to that period  
13 after you returned to Vietnam after 1961 to the period beginning  
14 in early 1963, would you relate to the Committee your experiences  
15 in connection with the build-up and the eventual General's  
16 coup and the downfall of the Diem government?

17 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

18 In February of 1962, two Air Force pilots, Vietnamese Air  
19 Force pilots, attacked the Presidential Palace of Ngo Dien Dien.  
20 This was not the first indication that there was something  
21 wrong, because if you will recall in November of 1960 there was  
22 another attempted coup.

23 At that time, in February, I was asked if I would go to the  
24 different military leaders which I knew and had known in the  
25 past to find out what was the political pressure, what was the

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1 temperature, was there really some dissidence within the military  
2 ranks, was there really a basis for an uprising against Ngo Dien  
3 Dien.

4 I was unable at that time to determine this fact. There  
5 was isolated dissidence within the military structure. This was  
6 reported in February or March in 1962.

7 In the meantime, Mr. Colby had assigned me to work with the  
8 Minister of the Interior of the Government of Vietnam, and I  
9 was responsible to be the liaison between the CIA and the  
10 Ministry of the Interior on a program, on a project, which was  
11 called Strategic Hamlet Program.

12 This was an idea forwarded by Ngo Dien Nhu, the President's  
13 brother and counsellor, to establish security within the  
14 hamlets and the villages where people lived so that they could  
15 deny access of food, taxes and what have you to the Vietcong.

16 In this position I was able to travel quite extensively  
17 because I was under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior  
18 and indirectly I worked for the President's brother who was in  
19 charge of the program and by travelling I was able to go to  
20 every province, I was able to talk to unit commanders down to  
21 and including small sections. Some of these people I had known  
22 for many years; some of them I had known back even in World War  
23 II. Some of them were in powerful positions, and I was able to  
24 talk to them on a person to person basis, not as a government  
25 official.

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1 I did wear a uniform though I was out of the Army when I  
2 was in that position because those military commanders who knew  
3 me always assumed that I was in the Army and that I was still in  
4 the Army. Therefore, it was much easier for me to travel in  
5 uniform and special arrangements were made for me to carry an  
6 identification card as being an active duty military officer.

7 This was done with the permission of General Harkins, and  
8 it was also known to General Westmoreland when General West-  
9 moreland took over.

10 In that period, I would say that the country team was  
11 attempting to get organized so they could show that they were  
12 speaking with one head under Ambassador Nolting, and we had  
13 a committee which the military and also agencies, including  
14 the CIA, were members, and it was called the Trushart Committee  
15 where we jointly made plans to help out the government of  
16 Vietnam in different programs, whether they be military programs  
17 or USAID type programs, self-help programs, also programs of  
18 which to arm the villagers so they could protect themselves.

19 We didn't arm them with modern weapons, we gave them  
20 shotguns, .12 gauge shotguns. There were very few modern  
21 weapons available for that type of activity.

22 At the same time, we were interested in the Montagnard  
23 Program and I did work with the Montagnards -- those are the  
24 hill tribes in central Vietnam.

25 We did arm certain elements of the Montagnards, and we did

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1 keep them up and organize them in paramilitary forces, and these  
2 forces were eventually turned over completely to the U.S.  
3 Army.

4 About -- well, I can say definitely on 7 of May, 1963,  
5 the Minister of Interior, myself and his entourage flew to  
6 Hue in central Vietnam. While in Hue, it was on my aircraft that  
7 I had assigned to me for that day -- while in Hue, they had a  
8 very large meeting of different military authorities and at that  
9 time I did not realize what was going on.

10 They had met with the President's brother, Ngo Dien Can,  
11 who was considered the war lord, in a way, and some decisions  
12 were made, of which I was not aware of. We returned quite late  
13 the night of the 7th; though I wanted to stay, the Ministry of  
14 the Interior told me it would be impossible. I wanted to see  
15 the celebration of the birthday of Buddha. I wanted to see  
16 the boats with the candles lit going down the perfumed river,  
17 but it was not to be.

18 The next day there was an attack by the military forces on  
19 the Buddhists. Up to that time, the Buddhists, as an entity,  
20 was not a political force and never thought of being, and when  
21 the attack on the Buddhists came about, this was, in my estima-  
22 tion, one of the turning points in what was happening in Vietnam.

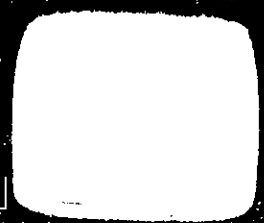
23 It could have been salvaged, but this -- again, I had  
24 talked later with the Minister of the Interior and I had talked  
25 with Ngo Dien Nhu on several occasions when they were trying to

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1 appease the situation. They were trying to meet some demands  
2 of the Buddhist leaders. This, unfortunately, did not come  
3 about.

4 I did not travel too much during the latter part of May  
5 or June, and it was quite evident at that time, to me and to  
6 other people who were there that there was a strong anti-American  
7 feeling, and also a restriction put on by the government of  
8 Vietnam about people associating with Americans.

9 The only time that it broke down was on the 4th of July of  
10 1963 when the Ambassador Nolting threw a party for the Indepen-  
11 dence Day and it seemed like every military leader and political  
12 personality was attending American parties that day.

13 I received a message to meet with General Don, who  
14 was Commander of I CORPS at that time, and it was in a public  
15 place, it was in the Caravelle Hotel downstairs where they had  
16 sort of a big dining room, a nightclub, and I was present with  
17 General Don and his entourage and everybody from the Diem  
18 government was in the same place. The place was jam packed.

19 lb It was at that time on the 4th of July that I had the  
20 first indication that something serious was being contemplated  
21 when General Don told me that if the Buddhist situation does  
22 not get settled that the military are planning. I reported  
23 this fact, and I believe it was around the 8th or 9th of July,  
24 that more indications -- on the 11th of July, Ngo Dien Nhu  
25 called the Generals together for a staff meeting at the General

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1 Staff Headquarters and shocked them by telling them that he  
2 knew of some coup planning going on by the Generals.

3 This scared the Generals and other officers, needless to  
4 say, that Ngo Dien Nhu would be completely aware that there  
5 was some dissidence in the ranks.

6 Nothing happened much before the 20th or 21st of August  
7 of 1963. At that time -- I have to go back a little bit.  
8 We had had bonzes burning themselves, and we had had local  
9 press releases made by Madam Nhu that sometimes were not too  
10 well received by the Americans and also antagonized the  
11 population.

12 On the night of the 21st of August, General Ton That Dinh,  
13 as Military Governor of Saigon and Commander of the 3rd Corps,  
14 had established a curfew. If I recall correctly, the curfew  
15 was to start about 7:00 or 8:00 o'clock at night. Anybody  
16 seen after that time would be seen -- after that would be shot.  
17 And that night, elements -- later on, we didn't know at that  
18 time, later on proving to be elements of the Special Forces,  
19 which was the praetorian guard of Ngo Dien Nhu and the police  
20 dressed in military uniforms attacked the pagodas in Saigon.

21 Now what was very bad about this, Ambassador Nolting had  
22 already been relieved and Ambassador Lodge was on his way to  
23 take over. And Ambassador Lodge arrived on the 22nd or 23rd  
24 of August. I am not sure exactly of the date.

25 And he found that Saigon was an armed camp.

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