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13 July 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: 13 July White House Vietnam Committee Meeting

1. At the 13 July meeting of the Vietnam Committee, Mr. Jorden of the White House Staff announced that there was to be a meeting in the late afternoon of 13 July on Vietnam attended by Mr. Katzenbach, Mr. Rostow, the Secretary or Deputy Secretary of Defense and, he thought, Mr. Helms. It was not clear just what this White House meeting was supposed to consider, but in discussing the matter we felt that one item high on the agenda might be the reply to Ambassador Bunker's political action cable, transmitted on 11 July as CAS SAIGON 9117.

2. As you know, and Mr. Habib knows, (but no one else) I drafted that Bunker cable. Mr. Habib and I also wrote the draft reply which, as we understand it, is now on Secretary Rusk's desk and may be considered at this afternoon's meeting.

3. My principal impression during my Saigon visit was that the Thieu/Ky relationship, its unstable state, and its possible consequences constituted our principal immediate political problem in Vietnam. To resolve it, it seemed imperative to me that we expand the Russ Miller contact into an advisory effort which would help us keep Ky and his immediate supporters on the rails and, at the same time, open up a channel of information through which we could monitor the in-fighting and atmosphere within the military establishment. My thoughts were discussed in considerable detail with John Hart and his senior officers, with Mr. Habib and, through Mr. Hart, with Ambassador Bunker. There was universal agreement that the type of action proposed in Bunker's cable was mandatory.

4. The action program is not a proposition that we support Ky. Instead it is a proposal that working through Ky -- the activist partner in the uneasy marriage -- we engineer a program of guidance with the Thieu/Ky ticket, i. e., a program designed to keep the military establishment working in the right directions, rather than going off the rails.

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5. The draft reply Habib and I prepared approves the program recommended in Bunker's cable but makes it very clear that what is being approved is a program of covert guidance to the Thieu/Ky ticket, not a program of backing Ky in opposition to Thieu. It calls attention to the need for establishing some form of contact with Thieu and, for that matter, with other civilian candidates. On funding, the draft reply makes it clear that the US Government is not prepared to bankroll the Thieu/Ky campaign though we are prepared to provide modest support to encourage the evolution of a civilian front organization (which could eventually become a political party)

(b)(1)
(b)(3)

6. I think the reply to Bunker Habib and I prepared is substantially what ought to be sent back from Washington and recommend that you support it if this subject does indeed come up at the meeting this afternoon.

G. A. Carver, Jr.
George A. Carver, Jr.

Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

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