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MEMORANDUM

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SUBJECT: Text of CAS/Saigon Cable [redacted] Dated 4 December 1971

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"1. At 0846 hours 4 December 1971 [redacted] intermediary telephoned. Call lasted 9-1/2 minutes. Intermediary, who was same individual as on 27 October and 27 November, started in English and conversation was conducted in English throughout. He called on Embassy number rather than the new number provided on 27 November.

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V. is intermediary [redacted]

A. HELLO.

V. I WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK TO [redacted]

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A. YES. [redacted] SPEAKING. GOOD MORNING. HOW ARE YOU?

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V. GOOD MORNING. HOW ARE YOU?

A. HAVE YOU DISCUSSED OUR PROPOSAL OF 27 NOVEMBER

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[redacted] AND IF SO, DO YOU HAVE AN ANSWER AND ANY INFORMATION FOR US?

V. YES, AH, A WEEK HAS PASSED AND ARE YOU IN

MEASURE TO ANSWER US CATEGORICALLY ON THE RELEASE

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[redacted]  
A. WE HAVE SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME REVIEWING OUR CONVERSATION OF 27 NOVEMBER AND WE WOULD LIKE TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

DPMO review(s)  
completed.

NSC review completed

State Dept. review completed

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SECRET/[redacted]

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1) WE ARE PREPARED TO RELEASE [REDACTED]

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ON 10 DECEMBER REPEAT 10 DECEMBER AT 1600 HOURS

AT 1600 HOURS AT TAN GANG ROBON [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] ARE YOU PREPARED TO GO AHEAD WITH THIS EXCHANGE?

V. YOU SEE WE HAVE DISCUSSED YOUR PROPOSAL LAST TIME AND WE EMPHASIZE ON THE GOOD WILL THIS TIME AND WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE ONE DISCUSSION, NO BARGAINING THIS TIME. I HAVE TO SAY CATEGORICALLY THIS TIME THAT YOU HAVE TO RELEASE IN ONE TIME

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[REDACTED] AND A NUMBER OF OTHER PRISONER OF WAR

AND WE SHALL GO AHEAD NEXT TIME. IF NOT, WE STOP ALL DISCUSSION ON POW THIS TIME.

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A. WOULD YOU LIKE TO HEAR THE REST. AGAIN, AS I STATED, WE WOULD LIKE TO EXCHANGE [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] ON 10 DECEMBER AND GO AT THIS STEP

BY STEP. HAVE YOU RECEIVED OR ARE YOU WILLING TO PROVIDE US WITH A LIST OF AMERICANS, FOREIGNERS AND VIETNAMESE OFFICERS FROM [REDACTED]

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V. NO, NO, NO, NO. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE THIS TIME. THERE IS ONLY ONE THING, THAT IS, YOU RELEASE

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SECRET/[redacted]

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[redacted]

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[redacted] A NUMBER OF PRISONER OF WAR AND  
THEN WE GO AHEAD. IF NOT WE STOP ALL THING THIS  
TIME.

A. OKAY. AGAIN, I HAVE JUST GIVEN YOU OUR POSITION  
AND I'D LIKE TO SAY THAT IF YOU WILL MAKE THIS  
EXCHANGE AND YOU PROVIDE US WITH A LIST, THIS WILL  
MAKE THINGS MOVE FASTER AND WILL ASSIST US IN  
WORKING OUT THE DETAILS OF FUTURE EXCHANGES [redacted]

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[redacted]

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[redacted] WE ARE WILLING TO DISCUSS HIS EXCHANGE  
AND TO WORK OUT THE DETAILS, BUT FOR THIS WE  
NEED THE LIST OF AMERICAN, FOREIGNERS AND ARVN  
OFFICERS THAT YOU NOW HOLD PRISONER. IN THIS  
REGARD YOU SHOULD REMEMBER THAT THERE ARE  
ALSO OTHER INDIVIDUALS IN CUSTODY IN SOUTH VIETNAM  
WHO WE ARE SURE YOU ARE INTERESTED IN EXCHANGING.

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[redacted]

[redacted]

SECRET/[redacted]

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V. I'M SORRY. YOU SEE BECAUSE THIS IS NOT A QUESTION OF ONE MAN OR TWO MAN, ONE IMPORTANT CADRE OR TWO IMPORTANT CADRE. IT IS A QUESTION OF PRINCIPLE YOU SEE. AND THIS TIME THE PRINCIPLE IS ON GOOD WILL. YOU SEE, FOR BOTH SIDES THERE WILL BE A NUMBER OF EXCHANGE IN THE FUTURE. SO, WE EMPHASIZE ON THE PRINCIPLE AND NOT THE BARGAINING OF ONE OR TWO OR UPON THE DEGREE OF IMPORTANCE. I HAVE SAID LAST TIME THAT WE ARE, FOR US SACRIFICE IS DAILY USE. YOU SEE. SO, THIS TIME YOU HAVE TO ANSWER US THAT IF OR NOT YOU RELEASE IN ONE TIME AND NO BARGAINING [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] IF NOT, WE STOP EVERYTHING TODAY.

A. OKAY. LET ME CONTINUE HERE, PLEASE, LET ME CONTINUE. THERE IS A POINT I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE THAT WE CONSIDER AN IMPORTANT POINT. IN YOUR TELEPHONE CALL OF 27 NOVEMBER YOU KEPT REFERRING TO AN AGREEMENT RELATING TO THE RELEASE OF SERGEANT JOHN SEXTON, JR. WE WOULD LIKE TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT YOU RELEASED SERGEANT SEXTON ON YOUR OWN INITIATIVE WITHOUT GIVING US ANY FORE- WARNING OR WITHOUT ANY PRIOR DISCUSSIONS,

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4  
SECRET [REDACTED]

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SECRET

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NOTIFICATIONS OR AGREEMENTS. WE BELIEVE IT IS  
IMPORTANT THAT YOU RECOGNIZE THAT THE RELEASE  
OF SERGEANT SEXTON WAS THE BEGINNING, THE  
BEGINNING, OF THIS SERIES OF SECRET EXCHANGES  
BUT IT IN NO WAY REPRESENTS ANY PART OF AN  
AGREEMENT REACHED IN ADVANCE. DO YOU UNDER-  
STAND THIS POINT.

A. NO, NO. YOU HAVE BEEN NOT, YOU HAVE NOT  
BEEN FAIR PLAYING FOR THE TIME JOHN SEXTON, JR.  
YOU HAVE MAKE, MAKE, SO MUCH PROPAGANDA

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WE HAVE AGREED THAT AFTER THAT, AFTER THIS

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FIRST STEP FOR US WE RELEASE

HIS

COMRADE

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ABOUT THE RELEASE OF JOHN SEXTON, JR.,

WE HAVE AGREED THAT TO KEEP SECRET AND YOU HAVE  
MADE SO MUCH PROPAGANDA ON THIS.

A. NO. NOW JUST A MOMENT NOW. I DIDN'T UNDER-  
STAND WHAT YOU MEAN WE MADE SO MUCH PROPAGANDA

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ON JOHN SEXTON, JR. WE MADE ABSOLUTELY NO  
PROPAGANDA ON JOHN SEXTON, JR. WOULD YOU  
EXPLAIN THAT TO ME BECAUSE AGAIN YOU KNOW IN  
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA THE PRESS IS FREE  
AND WHEN HE RETURNED, NATURALLY, THE PRISONER  
OF WAR ISSUE IS A VERY BIG ISSUE IN OUR COUNTRY  
AND THE PRESS PLAY THAT SEXTON, JR. RECEIVED  
GOING BACK TO THE UNITED STATES WAS A PERFECTLY  
NORMAL THING IN OUR SOCIETY, AND THE AMERICAN  
GOVERNMENT AGAIN MADE ABSOLUTELY NO....

V. (INTERRUPTING). I SEE. BUT ALL THIS ARE OF  
THE PAST, AND NOW FOR THE FUTURE. ( [REDACTED] COMMENT:  
WE BELIEVE SWITCH TO PROPAGANDA ASPECT IN  
EFFECT IS ADMISSION BY INTERMEDIARY THAT THEY  
RECOGNIZE THERE WAS NO PREVIOUS AGREEMENT AND  
THAT EARLIER REFERENCE TO "PREVIOUS AGREEMENT"  
WAS SIMPLY PLOY ON THEIR PART:) THERE IS ONLY  
ONE THING, EH? YES OR NO YOU RELEASE THIS TIME

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[REDACTED] IF NOT,  
WE STOP TODAY.

A. NOW. MAY I CONTINUE ON OUR POINT OF VIEW  
AGAIN?

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V. NO. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE YOU SEE. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR US.

A. OKAY. BUT LET ME JUST CONTINUE TO READ TO YOU ANOTHER POINT OR SO THAT WE HAVE. WE SUGGEST IN ORDER TO HAVE SINCERITY ON BOTH SIDES WE MUST START FROM THE SAME POINT, THEREFORE, WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU CONSIDER OUR PROPOSALS AS WE PUT THEM FORTH NAMELY THE EXCHANGE OF [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] THE LIST ON 10 DECEMBER AS THE FIRST STEP. AND THEN, WE IN TURN WILL CAREFULLY STUDY EACH OF YOUR SUBSEQUENT PROPOSALS AND WHEN THESE ARE SOUND WE WILL KNOW WHAT TO DO. WE WILL ACT PROMPTLY AND WITH SINCERITY. DO YOU UNDERSTAND THAT? WE ARE CONVINCED THAT OUR RELATIONSHIP WOULD BE MORE PRODUCTIVE IF WE COULD COMMUNICATE IN A MORE SATISFACTORY MANNER. IS IT POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO CONSIDER A DIRECT FACE-TO-FACE MEETING WITH US IN SAIGON? [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] CAN YOU AGREE TO A MEETING IN SAIGON? WE CAN GUARANTEE YOUR SECURITY ON THIS.

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AND IF NOT IN SAIGON, WHERE CAN WE MEET YOU?

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V. NO, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THIS BECAUSE IT IS NOT  
IN OUR PLAN. ( [ ] COMMENT: WE FEEL THAT THIS  
REACTION BY INTERMEDIARY IS CONSISTENT WITH WHAT  
WE KNOW ABOUT THEIR PREFERENCE FOR TELEPHONE  
CHANNEL AND RELUCTANCE TO GO BEYOND IT. BELIEVE  
HIS COMMENT ALSO INDICATES NARROW CONFINES  
WITHIN WHICH INTERMEDIARY WAS WORKING.) FOR THIS

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TIME, THERE IS ONLY ONE THING, TO RELEASE [ ]

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[ ] AND SOME OF HIS COMRADES. AND WE

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SHALL GO AHEAD AFTER THIS TIME. AND IF NOT, WE  
STOP EVERYTHING TODAY.

A. WELL, AGAIN I REGRETFULLY MUST SAY I HAVE  
GIVEN YOU OUR POSITION, AND OUR POSITION IS FIRM.  
WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL RECONSIDER IT AND CALL US  
BACK AND LET US KNOW IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND.

V. SO, THANK YOU VERY MUCH. I'M SORRY.

A. THANK YOU VERY MUCH, AND PLEASE DO CALL US  
AGAIN.

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V. THANK YOU. ( [ ] COMMENT: ALTHOUGH INTER-  
MEDIARY MADE NO REFERENCE TO ANOTHER CALL, WE

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SECRET [ ]



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HAVE DEFINITE IMPRESSION HE DID NOT CLOSE OUT THIS CHANNEL.)

A. GOODBYE.

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2. From our close review [redacted] it is clear that we have gotten our complete message across. Our principal impression of the 4 December conversation is that the intermediary was very polite, almost deliberately avoiding anything which could be interpreted as polemic, and expecting that we would not accept the proposed exchange as put forward by him. His voice was definitely conciliatory as if he were delivering a message he would prefer not to deliver. Equally significant is the fact that he did not say he would not call back. Although he rejected a face-to-face meeting, his manner of doing so (i. e., his statement it is not in the plan) seems to indicate he is working within the confines of a narrow script with no latitude to negotiate at this time. This leads us to conclude that he will probably make telephone recontact after regrouping with his superior. We still firmly believe their primary interest lies in recovery of [redacted] as indicated by the frequent referral to him as first of two individuals under discussion and the use of "Mr." in each instance.

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3. Ambassador Bunker was briefed. His and our view at this point is that we should sit tight and await another call. The Station Chief is working out arrangements to brief General Abrams."