

NSC review completed

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Text of [redacted] Saigon Cable Dated 27 November 1971

25X1

1. The following is a text of CAS/Saigon telegram [redacted] dated 27 November:

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V is intermediary [redacted]

A. HELLO.

V. HELLO.

A. YES.

V. YOU'D LIKE TO SPEAK TO MR. LOUIS.

A. YES, MR. LOUIS SPEAKING.

V. OH, GOOD MORNING MR. LOUIS. HOW DO YOU DO?

A. HOW ARE YOU?

V. YOU HAVE THE SALUTATIONS [redacted]

25X1

A. THANK YOU.

V. YES.

A. YES. WE'VE BEEN AWAITING YOUR CALL FOR SOME TIME NOW.

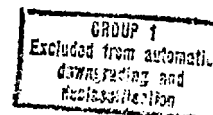
V. YES.

A. AND . . .

DPMO review(s) completed.

State Dept. review completed

SECRET/ [redacted]



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SECRET/[REDACTED]

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V. BUT WHAT HAS HAPPENED WITH EXCHANGE IN TA  
GANG ROBON?

A. YES.

V. WHAT HAS BEEN?

A. NO. 1, WE HAVE THE NEW TELEPHONE NUMBER THAT  
YOU WOULD LIKE. MAY I GIVE IT TO YOU?

V. YES.

A. THE NUMBER IS [REDACTED]

V. WOULD YOU PLEASE REPEAT?

A. YES [REDACTED]

V. WOULD YOU REPEAT IN FRENCH?

A. OKAY, FINE. (IN FRENCH) [REDACTED]

V. (IN FRENCH). OKAY, SHOULD WE SPEAK IN FRENCH?

A. OKAY, IF YOU WISH.

V. WHAT HAPPENED REGARDING THE TA GANG ROBON EX-

CHANGE? ([REDACTED] COMMENT: INTERMEDIARY SPOKE AS

THOUGH THERE HAD BEEN PREVIOUS AGREEMENT TO

EFFECT PRISONER EXCHANGE. FACT IS, NO SUCH

AGREEMENT WAS MADE DURING 27 OCTOBER TELEPHONE

CONTACT.)

A. WE AWAITED YOUR TELEPHONE CALL TO CONFIRM IT.

I'LL READ YOU OUR PROPOSAL.

SECRET/[REDACTED]

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- V. YES.
- A. I WROTE IT IN ENGLISH, BUT I'M GOING . . . .
- V. (IN ENGLISH). YOU CAN SPEAK ENGLISH IF YOU LIKE.
- A. (IN FRENCH). NO, IT'S OKAY. WHICH DO YOU PREFER?
- V. (IN FRENCH). FIRSTLY, WE'LL HAVE TO REVIEW THIS MATTER AGAIN BECAUSE AS YOU KNOW WHAT COUNTS IN THIS BUSINESS IS SINCERITY.
- A. YES, THAT'S CORRECT.
- V. (IN ENGLISH). THE FAIRPLAY, YOU SEE?
- A. (IN FRENCH). YES.
- V. THE LAST TIME IT WAS AGREED THERE WOULD BE NO PROPAGANDA OVER THE JOHN SEXTON, JR. AFFAIR AND YOU DIDN'T KEEP YOUR WORD. THAT WASNT NICE.
- ( [ ] COMMENT: SEXTON'S RELEASE WAS ON VC INITIATIVE RATHER THAN BASED ON PRIOR AGREEMENT.)
- SECONDLY . . . .
- A. (INTERRUPTING).
- V. LET ME TALK FOR A FEW MINUTES. WE AGREED ( [ ] COMMENT: INTERMEDIARY DID NOT PERMIT INTERRUPTION TO HIS REFERENCE TO PREVIOUS AGREEMENT.) THAT AFTER THE RELEASE OF JOHN SEXTON, JR. THAT YOU WOULD FREE TWO OF OUR MEN [ ]

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[REDACTED] WE WAITED, AND INSTEAD OF THESE TWO MEN YOU FREED ANOTHER, A LIEUTENANT. THIS WAS NOT PART OF OUR AGREEMENT. AND ALSO THE LAST TIME AT TA GANG ROBON WE WAITED AND WE SAW TWO HELICOPTERS WHICH CAME, BUT THE AGREED-UPON SIGNAL WAS NOT GIVEN. IF YOU THINK WE CAN CONTINUE THIS EXCHANGE IN A CORRECT MANNER, WE MUST DO IT UNDER THE AGREED-UPON CONDITIONS.

A. VERY WELL. I'LL TELL YOU WHAT WE PROPOSE.

V. YES.

A. FIRST. WE HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED YOUR REQUEST, YOUR REQUESTS, AND UNDERSTANDABLY THEY REQUIRED CONSIDERABLE THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION. WE AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO THE RELEASE [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] IF YOU STILL AGREE, AT TA GANG ROBON.

V. YES.

A. OKAY.

SECRET/[REDACTED]

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V. LET ME TALK IF YOU WILL.

A. OKAY.

V. [REDACTED]

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( [REDACTED] COMMENT: BELIEVE DIRECT REFERENCE AT THIS POINT [REDACTED] INDICATES SPECIAL IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO HIS RELEASE BY INTER-MEDIARY.) WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIM?

A. GOOD. [REDACTED]

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LIKE TO BEGIN [REDACTED] AND

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THEN [REDACTED] WE WOULD

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LIKE TO RECEIVE [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] A LIST OF OUR PRISONERS AND A LIST OF FOREIGN PRISONERS AND ALSO OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMY OFFICERS. WE WOULD LIKE TO STUDY THIS LIST AND THEN REDISCUSS THIS MATTER AFTER HAVING RECEIVED THE LIST.

V. I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU SAY AND YOU PLAY A VERY TIGHT GAME. THAT'S VERY GOOD, BUT I REPEAT, WE TOOK THE FIRST STEP. AND YOU KNOW THERE IS NO QUESTION OF BARGAINING OVER THE FIRST STEP. WE WANTED TO TEST YOUR SINCERITY IN SEEING YOU

SECRET/

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] I REPEAT THAT WE

ARE HOLDING OUT FOR OUR MEN BUT ALSO FOR SINCERITY FROM BOTH SIDES. IF YOU THINK YOU CAN

DO BETTER [REDACTED] YOU

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ARE POORLY CALCULATING. YOU KNOW THAT FOR US SACRIFICE IS OUR DAILY BREAD. THIS TIME, THERE IS ONLY ONE THING. REPEAT WHAT YOU SAID THE

LAST TIME. [REDACTED] COMMENT: AS NOTED ABOVE,

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NO PRIOR AGREEMENT WAS MADE.) THAT IS, THAT

YOU WILL FREE [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] BOTH AT THE SAME TIME AND YOU WILL

SEE THAT WE WILL REPLY VERY APPROPRIATELY TO

YOUR GOOD FAITH. IT'S NOT A QUESTION OF BARGAIN-

ING. I REPEAT, THERE WILL BE NO DISCUSSIONS

BECAUSE THEY WILL RUIN EVERYTHING. WE WANTED

THROUGH A SERIES OF SECRET CONVENTIONAL EX-

CHANGES TO TEST YOUR SINCERITY AND FROM THERE

GO ON TO OFFICIAL EXCHANGE. YOU SEE. THEREFORE

IT'S NOT IN YOUR INTEREST NOR IN THE INTEREST OF

NGUYEN VAN THIEU'S GOVERNMENT TO BARGAIN THIS

TIME. DO YOU UNDERSTAND? YOU HAVE OUR CONDITIONS.

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SECRET/

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A. GOOD. YOU UNDERSTAND, SIR, WE ARE NOT BARGAINING IN THAT SENSE, BUT IF YOU STILL INSIST ON HAVING THESE TWO MEN, WHO WILL YOU RELEASE FOR THEM?

V. WE ARE GOING TO RELEASE A NUMBER OF PRISONERS,

[REDACTED]

25X1

25X1

AND AFTERWARDS, WE'LL SEE. IN THIS MANNER WE CAN, LITTLE BY LITTLE, ARRIVE AT A VERY FRANK DISCUSSION AND HAVE LISTS AND A KIND OF FAIRNESS, A KIND OF JUSTICE FOR BOTH SIDES. SEE. AND FOR THE FIRST STEP, I REPEAT, NO BARGAINING. IT IS ABOVE ALL A MARK OF GOOD WILL.

A. I UNDERSTAND. WE CONSIDER IT A SIGN OF GOOD WILL ON OUR PART [REDACTED] AM I CORRECT?

V. NO, HE IS NOT THE MAN AGREED UPON, YOU SEE.

( [REDACTED] COMMENT: AS NOTED ABOVE, NO PRIOR AGREEMENT WAS MADE.) OUR AGREEMENT WAS TO RELEASE THE TWO GENTLEMEN [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] WE ARE SORRY YOU DIDN'T TAKE THIS FIRST STEP, OTHERWISE THIS BUSINESS WOULD BE GOING BETTER THAN IT IS.

A. YES, BUT THERE WAS A BIG PROBLEM. YOU CALLED US

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AT A BIG MOMENT, DURING THE INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT THIEU, AND WE HAD A LOT OF DIFFICULTY IN REACHING THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES.

V. GOOD. THEN I BELIEVE THAT BOTH SIDES WANT TO GET THIS MATTER MOVING. THEREFORE, WE WON'T TALK ANY LONGER ABOUT THE PAST. NOW IF YOU HAVE A MINUTE, LISTEN TO OUR CONDITIONS. AH, I REPEAT FOR THIS TIME, IT'S THE SAME PLACE - TA GANG ROBON, PHUC TINH, TAY NINH. WE'RE GOING AHEAD A BIT. IT WILL BE FROM 16 HOURS, THAT IS 4 O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON, NOT 3 O'CLOCK AS BEFORE. I REPEAT, FROM 1600 HOURS, TA GANG ROBON. THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY, THAT IS BY USING HELICOPTERS. NO AUTOMOBILES THIS TIME, NO JEEPS THIS TIME. ONLY A MAXIMUM OF TWO HELICOPTERS SHOULD COME, A MAXIMUM OF TWO HELICOPTERS. YOU TURN (CIRCLE) TWO TIMES, YOU TURN (CIRCLE) TWO TIMES. YOU WILL SEE BELOW TWO SMOKE SIGNALS. TWO GROUPS OF SMOKE SIGNALS TO NOTIFY YOU THE APPROXIMATE AREA WHERE WE CAN MEET, AND THEN ONE OF YOUR HELICOPTERS, OR BOTH, SHOULD GIVE THE THREE AGREED-UPON SMOKE SIGNALS; ONE RED, ONE YELLOW

SECRET/

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AND ONE BLUE, BETWEEN THESE TWO (OUR) SMOKE SIGNALS. ( [ ] COMMENT: DETAILS REGARDING LANDING SITE ARE MUCH MORE PRECISE THAN IN 27 OCTOBER TELEPHONE CONTACT.)

A. JUST A MINUTE. REGARDING THE SMOKE SIGNALS, INSTEAD OF BLUE, IT WILL BE GREEN.

V. YES, THAT IS, RED, YELLOW AND GREEN.

A. THAT'S RIGHT.

V. WE ARE GOING TO MEET APPROXIMATELY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE (OUR) TWO SMOKE SIGNALS.

A. OKAY.

V. AND, FOR THE DAYS, WE ARE GOING TO DRAW FROM OUR LAST EXPERIENCE. WE LEAVE YOU TO CHOOSE FROM THE 10TH TO THE 20TH OF DECEMBER. BETWEEN THE 10TH AND THE 20TH. BUT TWO GROUPS OF THREE DAYS. FOR EXAMPLE, 10, 11, 12 AND THEN 18, 19, 20. TWO GROUPS OF THREE DAYS.

A. KINDLY REPEAT THAT PLEASE.

V. BETWEEN THE 10TH AND 20TH OF DECEMBER. YOU CAN MAKE THE CHOICE AS YOU LIKE, BUT TWO GROUPS OF THREE DAYS. THAT IS, IT'S UP TO YOU TO CHOOSE AND WE WILL CONFIRM THIS A SECOND TIME BY TELEPHONE.

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SECRET [redacted]

A. I'M SORRY, BUT WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY TWO TRIPLED DAYS?

V. THAT IS TO SAY, TWO TIMES THREE CONSECUTIVE DAYS. (IN ENGLISH - TWO TRIPLE OF DAYS). (RETURN TO FRENCH). FOR EXAMPLE, 10, 11, 12 OR 14, 15, 16 FOR EXAMPLE.

A. OKAY, IF WE BRING THESE TWO MEN, I, LISTEN, NOW I CAN'T CONFIRM THIS, RIGHT? IT WILL BE NECESSARY FOR YOU TO CALL AGAIN IN THREE DAYS TO CONFIRM IT. BUT IF WE BRING THESE TWO MEN, WHO ARE YOU GOING TO GIVE US AT THAT TIME? WILL [redacted] BE THERE AND . . .

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V. (INTERRUPTING). SURELY AMONG - THAT IS, THERE WILL BE A SMALL NUMBER AND SURELY AMONG THEM . . .

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[redacted] COMMENT: MENTION OF ADDITIONAL PRISONERS [redacted] IS NEW FACTOR.)

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A. HOW MANY MEN WILL BE THERE?

V. A FEW. (HIS VOICE SEEMED SLIGHTLY HUMORED HERE.)

A. A FEW?

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V. YES, A FEW [redacted]

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A. GOOD, THAT IS TO SAY, WHEN WE LAND [redacted]

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[redacted]

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V. (INTERRUPTING). YOU WILL HAVE [REDACTED]  
THAT'S FOR SURE. YOU WILL HAVE [REDACTED]  
IT'S SURE, YOU HAVE MY WORD.

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A. AND SOME OTHERS?

V. YES, SOME OTHERS.

A. BUT CAN'T YOU GIVE ME THEIR NAMES?

V. NO, AH . . . FOR THE MOMENT, IT'S NOT POSSIBLE.

A. OKAY, BUT I EXCUSE MYSELF NOW BY BEGINNING TO  
SAY THINGS THAT YOU ARE GOING TO UNDERSTAND AS  
BARGAINING, RIGHT?

V. NO, BUT FOR THE MOMENT GIVE ME RIGHT AWAY THE  
TWO THREE DAYS. AH. BECAUSE WE WILL CONFIRM  
WITH YOU A SECOND TIME BY PHONE. SO, WHAT IS  
YOUR CHOICE BETWEEN THE 10TH AND THE 20TH FOR  
THE TWO THREE-DAY PERIODS?

A. BETWEEN THE 10TH AND THE 20TH, WE CAN SAY THE  
10TH, 11TH AND 12TH.

V. YES, 10, 11, 12 AS THE FIRST TRIPLE DAYS. AND THE  
SECOND?

A. AND THEN, THAT IS, WE'LL ARRIVE CERTAINLY, SAY,  
ON THE 12TH.

V. YES, SAY THE 12TH.

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A. THE 10TH, EXCUSE ME, THE 10TH.

V. THE 10TH, YES.

A. AND THE OTHER TRIPLE DAYS, SAY THE 13TH, 14TH AND 15TH.

V. GOOD, TWO CONSECUTIVE TRIPLES.

A. THAT'S IT.

V. THE 10TH TO THE 15TH. AND, WE WILL CONFIRM THIS BY TELEPHONE WHAT DAY, WHAT TRIPLES OF DAYS WE ARE GOING TO CHOOSE. AND, IF POSSIBLE, THE EXACT DAY WE CAN RECEIVE YOU.

A. OKAY. BUT IN ANY CASE, SIR, WE BEGAN WITH THE QUESTION THAT WE WILL CERTAINLY RELEASE

25X1

V. YES.

25X1 A. AND WE ASK YOU IF WE CAN HAVE A LIST OF THE OTHER PRISONERS.

V. YES.

A. OF U.S. PRISONERS AND THEN FOREIGN PRISONERS AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE OFFICERS.

V. YES.

A. GOOD, WHAT DO YOU . . .

V. (INTERRUPTING). YOU KNOW WE'LL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT AND VERY SERIOUSLY EXAMINE YOUR CONDITIONS. BUT I REPEAT ONE MORE TIME AND OUR, OUR ADVICE STICKS TO THE . . . AH, AH, TO INSIST ON THE FACT THAT THE PRISONERS ARE NOT BARGAINABLE. BUT WE WILL STILL EXAMINE VERY SERIOUSLY AND WITH A LOT OF GOOD FAITH YOUR PROPOSITION. GOOD. THEN IS EVERYTHING SETTLED?

A. YES, IT'S CLEAR; ONE MOMENT.

V. (INTERRUPTING). GOOD, IF WE TELEPHONE YOU A SECOND TIME, IT WILL BE PERHAPS AGAIN ONE SATURDAY MORNING.

A. A SATURDAY MORNING.

V. PERHAPS NEXT WEEK.

A. GOOD, OKAY.

V. AND UNTIL THEN, MY WISHES. GOOD BYE.

A. GOOD BYE, SIR.

V. GOOD BYE.

2. TO PROVIDE CONTEXT FOR YOUR REVIEW OF THE ABOVE  
TRANSCRIPT:

A. THERE WERE NO APPARENT NUANCES IN THE INTERMEDIARY'S CONVERSATION.

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B. THE INTERMEDIARY SPOKE IN AN AUTHORITATIVE MANNER.

C. AS YOU ARE AWARE, IT WAS SEXTON'S RELEASE ON VC INITIATIVE THAT TRIGGERED THE SUBSEQUENT EXCHANGE. THERE WAS NO DEAL IN ADVANCE ON SEXTON THAT WE KNOW OF.

D. SEVERAL REFERENCES BY THE INTERMEDIARY TO THE PREVIOUS AGREEMENT SEEM TO INDICATE A RELATIVELY HARD-LINE POSITION SINCE NO PREVIOUS AGREEMENT WAS MADE [REDACTED]

25X1

E. THE INTERMEDIARY'S FRENCH, AS HIS ENGLISH, WAS CLEAR AND DELIBERATE. ALTHOUGH THE INTERMEDIARY HAS HAD NO DIFFICULTY WITH EITHER LANGUAGE, HE IS OBVIOUSLY MORE COMFORTABLE IN FRENCH.

3. AMBASSADOR BUNKER HAS BEEN BRIEFED AND IS STUDYING THE TRANSCRIPT IN PREPARATION FOR DETAILED DISCUSSIONS WITH MR. SHACKLEY ON 28 NOVEMBER. THE RESULTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE AMBASSADOR WILL BE CABLED.

4. GENERAL ABRAMS IS NOT PRESENTLY IN THE COUNTRY.

MR. SHACKLEY ALERTED GENERAL POTTS [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] OF A FOLLOW-UP TELEPHONE CALL CONCERNING THE

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PRISONER EXCHANGE. MR. SHACKLEY PLANS TO BRIEF GENERAL WEYAND ON THE DETAILS ON 28 NOVEMBER. [REDACTED] HEADQUARTERS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE IS BRIEFED PROMPTLY ON THE CONTENTS OF THE ABOVE TRANSCRIPT. MR. SHACKLEY WILL SO ADVISE GENERAL WEYAND IN AN EFFORT TO OBVIATE THE USE BY HIM OF MILITARY CHANNELS.

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