

HA chom

MEMORANDUM

FILED
16
OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

32358-X

URGENT ACTION

September 9, 1971

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

MEMORANDUM FOR:

DR. KISSINGER

FROM:

JOHN H. HOLDRIDGE *JHS*

SUBJECT:

Letter From Vice President Ky

John Negroponte received Dang Duc Khoi, Vice President Ky's personal friend and adviser, at my office in the EOB this afternoon. (I stayed away in order to give Khoi the least possible political handle.)

Khoi presented the letter addressed to you by Vice President Ky dated August 29 (Tab A). In his letter Ky states that it is imperative to resolve the present electoral crisis which he believes will gravely affect the future of the joint endeavor between our two nations. Ky also says he had several meetings with Ambassador Bunker and valued highly his efforts to smooth out the course of events. Ky says that the solution he had offered was for both Thieu and himself to resign from office so that free and unbiased elections could be organized by the President of the Senate. He added that, while he remained open to other solutions, the indications were that President Thieu is persisting in his plan to run uncontested.

Ky closes his letter by saying he would deeply appreciate your advice and assistance in this matter and that "Mr. Khoi is entitled to discuss all details."

In his conversation with Negroponte, Khoi was very low key. He said he had already talked to Ambassador Sullivan and the principal purpose of his call here was to deliver the letter. Ky said that one thing that had not been mentioned in the letter but which Vice President Ky had told him to relay was the belief that a "special envoy" should be sent by the U.S. to Vietnam to try to work out the situation.

In talking about the present situation Khoi repeatedly referred to the need for a "consensus" to overcome the present electoral crisis and he added that Ky was ready to "play his part" in the search for such a consensus.

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

*Should
sole
something
we
can
just
let it
drift*

DOS, NSS, Review Completed.

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

Negroponete took the line with Khoi that he was simply meeting with him to receive the letter which he would convey to his superiors and to take note of what Khoi had to say. Negroponete did ask Khoi if Ky had been quoted correctly during his backgrounder last weekend when he is reported to have threatened to overthrow Thieu. Khoi replied that Ky had been misquoted and that the purpose of Ky's backgrounder had been simply to focus attention on existing political tensions in Saigon. Khoi expressed "regret" that he had not been there to advise Ky when he made his remarks to the press, (i. e. to keep him from putting his foot in his mouth.)

In response to a question, Khoi said he did not plan to divulge publicly the fact that he had met with an NSC staff member nor the fact that he had delivered a letter. We doubt, however, that his visit here will remain secret very long and see no harm in being prepared to reply to possible press queries that Khoi delivered a letter from Ky to a member of your staff without divulging its contents.

I think we should also state as part of any response on this question that you do not intend to reply to Vice President Ky's letter. This would serve to dampen any speculation by oppositionists and uneasiness or concern on the part of the GVN.

In the same vein, I believe you should authorize us to transmit a copy of Ky's letter to the State Department on a NODIS basis. They have already inquired about the possibility of receiving a copy and in this instance I believe we should give them one to avoid generating any speculation that the White House is dealing privately with Ky.

25X1

RECOMMENDATION:

That you approve the suggested press guidance outlined above, including a reply, if asked, that no White House response to Ky's letter is intended.

Approve AK Disapprove _____

That you authorize us to transmit a copy of Ky's letter to the State Department on a NODIS basis.

Approve AK Disapprove _____

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY



Saigon, ngày 29 tháng 8 năm 1971

Phó Tổng Công Việt Nam Cộng Hòa

Dear Dr. Kissinger

I am sending my very trusted assistant, Mr. DANG DUC KHOI, to report to You on my grave apprehensions concerning the present developments in Saigon.

During our last encounter, I already expressed the fear that efforts on the part of the government to predetermine the outcome of the elections could lead to a very serious crisis. I was much gratified to learn from You that the United States was committed to fair elections in Vietnam.

Unfortunately, the government of President NGUYEN VAN THIEU has since resorted to all possible manners of fraudulent electoral manipulations. In the past six weeks, it has so openly, so defiantly corrupted our basic institutions that the political life of this nation is now paralyzed with popular resistance and anger, and that our society and our armed forces are threatened with disintegration.

.../...

I had several meetings with Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, and I valued very highly his efforts to smooth out the course of events; but it was too late for me to rectify the errors which had been accumulated over a long period of time. Nevertheless, I made the suggestion that both President Thieu and I should resign from our offices, and leave the organization of totally free, unbiased elections with the President of the Senate. I believe my proposal to be capable of ensuring both the continuation of the constitutional process, and political fairness vis a vis the President. While I remain open to other suggestions, indications until this hour tend to show that President Thieu is persisting in his plan to run uncontested.

I fear that the present crisis will gravely affect the future of the joint endeavour between our two nations. What I regret most is that - by confining the presidential elections to a matter of personalities - President Thieu is denying the people of Vietnam an opportunity to pronounce their options regarding such vital issues as the search for peace, the basic tenets for our future economic and social development, the chances of unity among the non - Communists in South Vietnam... I believe that partly due to the immense sacrifices consented to by your people in favor of ours, partly due to the new juncture in international developments, this moment is the best for us to make such a choice. It is therefore imperative that we resolve the present electoral crisis, and proceed toward the future.

I shall deeply appreciate your advices and your assistance in this matter. Mr. Khoi is entitled to discuss all details.

In sending my envoy with this letter today, dear Dr. Kissinger, I hope that You and I shall always make good our mutual promise to consult with each other in times of difficulty, in a spirit of good will and of service to our countries.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. B. Johnson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right and then curving downwards.

Page Denied

25X1

25X1

25X1

Page Denied

25X1