

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

ACTION

September 11, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: GENERAL HAIG

FROM: RICHARD T. KENNEDY *JK*

SUBJECT: The Possibility that the DRV will try to Assassinate Thieu

The article attached again raises the possibility that Hanoi will try to pull off a "surprise" before the election to upset the present military and political balance between the two sides. Although a military "surprise" of the Tet dimension is most unlikely, a desperate assassination attempt against Thieu may well be within the capability of the DRV. If successful, it would certainly present the U.S. Government with a "surprise," the consequences of which (for us) cannot be good and could prove disastrous.

The DRV may well have this capability and certainly -- at least to the western mind -- such an attempt would be a logical one for the DRV to try.

We should make certain that the Thieu Government -- and our mission in Saigon -- is adequately prepared:

- to protect against Thieu's assassination; and
- in the event of his assassination, to keep the present Saigon Government from disintegrating.

If you agree, I will discreetly query George Carver to make certain that concerned elements of our Saigon mission have kept this possibility under review, that all reasonable planning has been done to meet such a contingency, and that they are satisfied that Thieu has kept this in mind in his own internal planning. For the obvious reason, we must do any checking with the utmost discretion, and I would emphasize this -- we are not calling for planning, just checking to see if it has been done.

NSS review completed.

Agree ✓ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_

Attachment

John Holdridge concurs.

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

# Hanoi Officials Hint War May End Before Election

Reuter

PEKING, Sept. 5—Senior North Vietnamese officials have hinted that the Indochina war could possibly end before or shortly after the American presidential election in November, travellers just back from Hanoi said here today.

But if no agreement is reached by November, the North Vietnamese affirmed that they had "surprises ahead" on the battlefield, the travellers said. Hanoi officials admitted to the visitors, how-

ever, that the U.S. bombing and harbor-mining was having an effect.

The visitors, who had talks with officials just below the level of North Vietnam's ruling triumvirate, said this was the first time they had heard even a cautious note of optimism from Hanoi channels about the possibility of a Vietnam cease-fire within a definite time frame.

[A contradictory report filed by UPI from London quoted Communist diplomats who re-

cently visited Hanoi and said these sources indicate that North Vietnam will wait until after the U.S. presidential election before considering a possible settlement of the war.]

The reports came 24 hours after the exiled Cambodian head of state, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, had told reporters here that a few days ago Premier Chou En-lai had said there was a possibility of President Nixon stopping the war just before the election or within a month or two afterwards.

Like Chou, the returned visitors from Hanoi indicated that North Vietnamese officials had also said there was an equal possibility that the war could continue indefinitely.

Observers here note that President Nixon and other senior U.S. officials have recently referred to the possibility of a quick end to the war. Diplomats speculate that Mr. Nixon, Chou and the North Vietnamese leaders may know more about secret negotiation than has yet become public.

Diplomatic sources here said today it was possible that North Vietnam might be prepared to make some concessions—possibly fewer than the Americans—to reach a peaceful solution.

Some observers believe Chou's theory that a quick end to the war is possible could stem from information which the President's foreign policy adviser Henry Kissinger conveyed when he was here in June.

Observers believe the North Vietnamese leaders have reservations about Mr. Nixon's intentions—hence their references to continued warfare. Their allusion to "surprises ahead" if there is no settlement soon may refer to attacks on Saigon, it is believed here.

The pro-Communist forces have been edging closer to the South Vietnamese capital and one battle last week took place only 35 miles north of it.