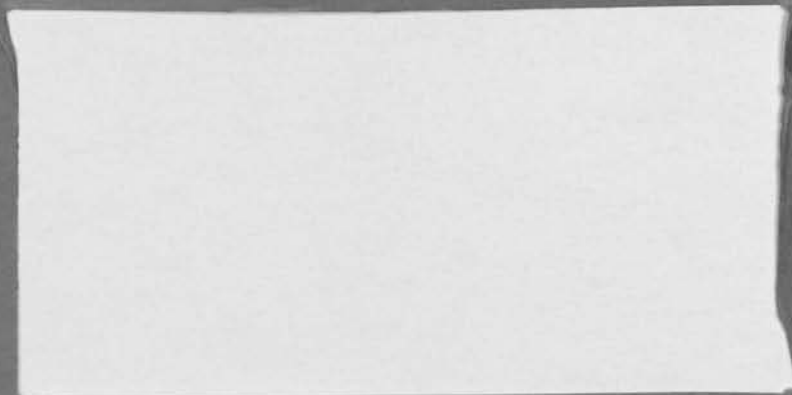


VI.C Settlement of the Conflict (6 Vols.)  
Histories of Contacts (4 Vols.)  
1. 1965-1966

**TOP SECRET - SENSITIVE**



**UNITED STATES - VIETNAM RELATIONS**  
**1945 - 1967**



**VIETNAM TASK FORCE**

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

*SET #13*

Sec Def Cent Mr. X-\_\_\_\_\_

0295

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VI. C. 1.

SETTLEMENT OF THE CONFLICT

History of Contacts

Negotiations, 1965 - 1966

Sec Def Cont. Nr. X-0295

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NEGOTIATIONS, 1965-1966

This book includes five negotiating tracks:

- (1) Seaborn Missions (Canadian ICC Delegate Periodic Visits to Hanoi), June 1964 - June 1965.
- (2) Project Mayflower (the First U.S. Bombing Pause), May 12-18, 1965.
- (3) XYZ (U.S. Contacts with Mai Van Bo in Paris), May 19, 1965 - May 6, 1966.
- (4) Pinta-Rangoon (the Second U.S. Bombing Pause), December 24, 1965 - January 31, 1966.
- (5) Ronning Missions (Canadian Ambassador Extraordinary Visits to Hanoi), March and June, 1966.

Each section has a summary and analysis followed by a chronology (except Project Mayflower, which is told narratively).

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SEABORN

THE SEABORN MISSION TO HANOI, JUNE 1964-JUNE 1965

This paper considers US/DRV communications passed via the Canadian ICC Delegate, J. Blair Seaborn. It is in three parts: (1) a discussion of principal topics; (2) a summary description of Seaborn's main visits to Hanoi; and (3) a more detailed chronology extracted from cables, reports and memoranda. Part 3 contains the references underlying part 1; they are keyed in Part 1 by dates, in brackets.

Discussion

The messages carried by Seaborn were unusually substantive and dramatic. Possible (but quite different) settlement terms were sketched by both sides, but the main subject stressed repeatedly by each was its determination to do and endure whatever might be necessary to see the war to a conclusion satisfactory to it.

To the extent they believed each other, the two sides were amply forewarned that a painful contest lay ahead. Even so, they were not inclined to compromise their way out. They held very different estimates of the efficacy of US military might. We thought its pressures could accomplish our goals. The Communists did not.

Resolution to Win

Both sides gave strong warnings as early as June 1964. On Seaborn's first visit to Hanoi, he conveyed US determination "to contain the DRV to the territory allocated it" at Geneva 1954 and to see the GVN's writ run throughout SVN. US patience was running thin. If the conflict should escalate, "the greatest devastation would of course result for the DRV itself."<sup>a</sup> He underlined the seriousness of US intentions by reminding his principal contact, Pham Van Dong, that the US commitment to SVN had implications extending far beyond SE Asia. (6/20/64)

<sup>a</sup>As reported in another study, Seaborn's was not the only warning given the DRV that June. Dillon also told the French Finance Minister, on the presumption it would be relayed to Hanoi, that we would use military force against the North if necessary to attain our objectives in SVN.

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Pham Van Dong laughed and said he did indeed appreciate the problem. A US defeat in SVN would in all probability start a chain reaction extending much further. But the stakes were just as high for the NLF and its supporters, hence their determination to continue the struggle regardless of sacrifice. (6/20/64)

He did not specifically deny that there was DRV intervention in the South and said of the war in SVN, "We shall win." (Emphasis added.) But he also said "the DRV will not enter the war . . . we shall not provoke the US." (6/18/64) Perhaps he drew a distinction between existing levels of DRV intervention and "entering the war." He also warned that "if the war were pushed to the North, 'nous sommes un pays socialiste, un des pays socialistes, vous savez, et le peuple se dressera.'" (6/18/64) This is quite ambiguous, but does threaten further consequences should the DRV itself come under attack.

Although he clearly did not consider the DRV under attack at that time, he complained that "US military intervention" in Laos in the wake of the April 1964 coup was spilling over the frontier. "There are daily incursions of our air space across the Laotian border by overflights of military aircraft and by commando units bent on sabotage." (6/18/64)

Their positions stiffened after Tonkin. When Seaborn saw Pham Van Dong on August 13, he transmitted a blunt US refutation of the DRV's Tonkin Gulf account and an accusation that DRV behavior in the Gulf sought to cast the US as a paper tiger or to provoke the US.

Pham Van Dong answered angrily that there had been no DRV provocation. Rather, the US had found "it is necessary to carry the war to the North in order to find a way out of the impasse . . . in the South." He anticipated more attacks in the future and warned, "Up to now we have tried to avoid serious trouble; but it becomes more difficult now because the war has been carried to our territory . . . If war comes to North Vietnam, it will come to the whole of SE Asia. . ." (8/13/64)

He was thus ambiguous about whether he considered the war already carried to the North or yet to come and of course about that the consequences would be. As indicated in another study; however, it is now believed that the first organized NVA units infiltrated into SVN were dispatched from the DRV in August, 1964. (These units were being readied as early as April 1964. The date of the decision to dispatch them is, of course, unknown.) Meanwhile, Seaborn observed the North Vietnamese to be "taking various precautionary measures (air raid drills, slit trenches, brick bunkers, etc. and, reportedly at least, preparation for evacuation of women and children.)" (8/17/64)

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The DRV position stiffened further after Pleiku. Seaborn returned to Hanoi in December, 1964, but at our request did not actively seek appointments with ranking leaders. He was to leave the initiative to them, but they did not seek him out either and he returned to Saigon without significant contact.

When he visited again, March 1-4, 1965, he was given a US message to convey to Pham Van Dong. The latter was "too busy", and he had to settle for Col. Ha Van Lau, NVA liaison to the ICC, who received him March 4. (3/5/65)

From Lau and others, he gathered that Hanoi was not seriously concerned by the US air strikes, considering them an attempt to improve US bargaining power at a conference the US strenuously desired. Hanoi's interpretation, he believed, was that the US realized it had lost the war and wanted to extricate itself; hence it was in Hanoi's interest to hold back -- a conference then might, as in 1954, deprive it of total victory. (3/7/65) DRV interest in Seaborn as a channel of communication with the US seemed to him virtually to have vanished, whereas it had been underlined by Pham Van Dong both in June and August. (3/5/65) On March 3, Mai Van Bo told the Quai in Paris that "while previously the DRV had been ready to consider negotiation of some sort, US actions had changed the situation. Negotiations (were) no longer a matter for consideration at this time." (3/4/65)

The May 1964 Bombing Pause brought no softening. The US/DRV impasse was again reflected in Seaborn's May 31-June 6 (1964) visit to Hanoi. On the one hand, Embassy Saigon expressed reservations about a passage in his instructions because it might "lead us towards a commitment to cease bombing simply in return for a cessation or reduction in VC armed actions in SVN." (5/28/64) On the other, Seaborn returned from Hanoi persuaded that the "DRV is not now interested in any negotiations." (6/7/64)

#### Opposing Proposals for Settling the War

The toughness of the two sides was reflected by large differences in their proposals for settling the war. The US wanted Hanoi to bring an end to armed resistance to the GVN in SVN. In exchange, it was willing to co-exist peacefully with the DRV, extending to it the possibility of economic and other beneficial relations enjoyed by Communist countries such as Poland and Yugoslavia. The US sought neither military bases in the region nor the overthrow of the regime in Hanoi. (6/1/64)



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Pham Van Dong replied that a "just solution" in Indochina required (1) US withdrawal from Indochina; (2) the affairs of SVN to be arranged by the SVN people, with NLF participation; (3) "peace and neutrality for SVN, neutrality in the Cambodian manner"; and (4) reunification. He said that the idea of coalition government was snow-balling in SVN and that the Laos pattern of 1962 should serve as a guide for SVN.

When Seaborn expressed the fear that the NLF would take over any coalition in which it participated, Pham Van Dong said "there was no reason to have such fears." He also said that neutrality for SVN need not be considered only as a first step toward reunification. SVN would remain neutral as long as the "people of SVN" wished. (6/18/64)

These opening positions, sketched by the two sides during Seaborn's June 1964 visit, were swamped then and subsequently by the discussion of military measures and their possible consequences. The two sides were never close in their proposals, though in both cases their initial language was sufficiently flexible to permit subsequent bargaining and compromise. But their differing estimates of what would be accomplished in battle kept them from focusing the Seaborn exchanges on settlement terms, and no reduction in their differences over settlement occurred after the first visit.

#### The Laotian Problem

Seaborn expressed US concern at DRV intervention in Laos on his June 1964 visit. Pham Van Dong replied, "We do not send units to the Pathet Lao." He leveled charges of US military intervention there and demanded a "return to the situation which existed prior to the April coup." To restore peace and neutrality in Laos, "a new conference of the 14 parties is necessary. . . . Only the 14 nation conference is competent to deal with the Laos situation."

The problem of Laos was not pursued in subsequent contacts.

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Summary

1964 Seaborn Conversations<sup>a</sup>

June 1964. In his (June 18, 1964) meeting with Pham Van Dong (which took place with no one else present) Seaborn communicated a US message (a) emphasizing US determination to contain the DRV to the territory allocated it by the Geneva Agreements (1954), (b) re-assuring the DRV that the US did not seek to overthrow the DRV or want military bases in SVN, (c) noting that the US was aware of Hanoi's control over the Viet Cong, (d) indicating that the US stake in resisting a DRV victory in SVN was increased by the relevance of this type of struggle to other areas of the Free World, (e) noting that US patience was growing thin, and (f) hinting at the benefits of "peaceful coexistence" to other Communist regimes.

Pham Van Dong clearly understood the message but declined "at present" to send any formal reply. He emphasized the key points in a "just solution" for the DRV were (a) a US withdrawal from SVN, (b) the establishment of a neutral "Cambodian-style" regime in SVN, in accordance with the NFL program, and (c) NFL participation in the determination of the fate of SVN when SVN was ready for negotiations. Pham emphasized the DRV's determination to continue with the struggle if the US increased its aid to the GVN and that the ultimate success of the Viet Cong was not in question. Pham denied that SVN's neutrality was only a first step, stating this was up to the people of the region. Pham did not specifically challenge Seaborn's observation that, while the NFL would have to be in a SVN coalition government, it did not represent all or even a majority of South Vietnamese. Pham added that there was no reason to fear that the NFL would take over a coalition government.

Pham told Seaborn that the DRV would not "force" or "provoke" the US. He concluded by stating that he looked forward to further talks with Seaborn and that the next time Seaborn could also see Ho Chi Minh.

Seaborn concluded from the conversation that one could not count on war weariness, factionalism, or the prospect of material benefits to bring the DRV to an accommodation with the US. He emphasized Pham's confidence in ultimate victory and conviction that military action could not bring the US success.

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<sup>a</sup> This paper was drafted for State Department use by P.H.Kreisberg November 20, 1965.

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Comment: My impression is that the general tone of the conversation did appear to offer some grounds for believing that at a subsequent discussion additional progress might be made toward preliminaries for concrete discussions. It should be noted that neither our message nor Pham's remarks raised the question of any direct contact or discussions between the US and the DRV.

August 1964. The key theme at the next meeting between Seaborn and Pham Van Dong on August 13, 1964 (this time in the presence of two other DRV observers) was the Tonkin Gulf incident. The US message conveyed by Seaborn rejected the DRV version of the incident, charged the DRV with deliberately planning the attack, and stated that as a result the US was increasing its military forces in SVN. The message also once more referred to possible economic and other benefits for the DRV if it halted its expansionism.

Pham's reaction was extremely angry. He said the US was seeking a way out by expanding the war to North Viet-Nam and that the US election campaign was also responsible for the stronger US line. He stressed the "very dangerous" nature of the situation, said the US might be led to "new acts of aggression", and warned that the DRV would fight a war if it came and that this would spread to all SEA and possibly further. He referred to support from other countries including Peking and Moscow. At the same time he said the DRV had tried for peace but the US did not want it. He urged the ICC to take a more important role and seek a solution "on the basis of the Geneva Agreements." He emphasized that he found the Seaborn link useful and wanted to keep the channel open.

Seaborn commented on the meeting that Pham Van Dong's reaction was not surprising in view of the blunt US rebuttal of the official DRV position and that the DRV might actually believe there was a chance of new US attacks. He found no evident DRV concern over the firmness of the US message, however, and noted that Pham's reaction had been one of anger rather than of seeking a way out. Seaborn was encouraged by Pham's desire to keep the channel of communication open but thought Pham continued to be "genuinely convinced" that things were going the DRV's way and there was no need to compromise.

Comment: The negotiating content of this meeting was totally barren as a result of its timing and its complete focus on the events immediately preceding it rather than on broader issues as had been adumbrated at the June meeting. Pham made no effort to develop his remarks in June or to bring Seaborn together with Ho. The participation of other DRV observers, including a note taker, in the meeting may also have forced an increased formality, coldness, and rigidity in Pham Van Dong's remarks as compared with those in June. There is no question,

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however, that there was no indication of "give" in Pham's position and that the only note of "encouragement" was his continuing desire to keep lines of communication open.

December 1964. On Seaborn's visit to Hanoi in December he carried no US message, it having been agreed that it was now up to Hanoi to take some initiative. Seaborn did not actively seek appointments with any ranking DRV leaders but did make it clear that he was available if anyone he had seen earlier wished to see him again. He saw Pham Van Dong informally at a social gathering but Pham did not use the opportunity to discuss substantive matters or seek a further appointment with him. Seaborn was told other DRV leaders were away or unavailable. Seaborn told junior DRV officials of continued US firmness and of the possibility that further US counteraction might be taken.

Comment: The complete aridity of this visit suggests that the DRV had changed its mind about using Seaborn as a channel of communication, was not prepared to make any new or forward proposals on negotiations, or--contrary to our own conclusion--believed the initiative to make some new offer lay in the US court and that if Seaborn was carrying no new message there was no point in carrying on the exchange at that time.

Over-all Comment: I believe that the August and December meetings support the tenor of your memorandum to Mr. Ball but that this is less certain in the case of the June conversation. I also believe specific note should be taken of the fact that Seaborn did not specifically request an interview at a high level in December. It might be put that Hanoi made no effort in December when Seaborn was there to renew its discussions or put forward any new proposal for negotiations or meetings.

The Seaborn Approach to Hanoi<sup>b</sup>

March 1965: At our request, Blair Seaborn, Chief Canadian representative on the International Control Commission in Vietnam, gave the Hanoi authorities on March that portion of Ambassador Cabot's February 24 statement to WANG Kuo-chuan in Warsaw dealing with Vietnam. We hoped thus to convince the North Vietnamese that the United States has no designs on their territory nor any desire to destroy them. Seaborn, at our suggestion, sought an appointment with the Prime Minister, but was obliged to settle for a meeting with the chief of the North Vietnamese Army's Liaison Section, to whom he read the

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<sup>b</sup> This paper was prepared for State Department use. Its date of preparation and drafter are not indicated. Sub-headings have been supplied.

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statement. This officer commented that it contained nothing new and that the North Vietnamese already received a briefing on the Warsaw meeting from the Chicoms. The Canadian Government publicly noted in April that Seaborn had two important conversations with DRV officials in recent months, but did not go into details.

June 1965. In May we again asked Seaborn to seek an appointment with Phan Van Dong and on our behalf reiterate the March message and U.S. determination to persist in the defense of South Vietnam, to regret that Hanoi had not responded positively to the various recent initiatives, including the bombing pause, and to state that, nevertheless, the United States remained ready "to consider the possibility of a solution by reciprocal actions on each side." If the Vietnamese brought up Pham Van Dong's four points, Seaborn was authorized to endeavor to establish whether Hanoi insisted that they be accepted as the condition for suspension, that we planned to inform Hanoi separately, and that we expected Hanoi would find easily detectable means of displaying that it understood the message.

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CHRON

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May 1, 1964

STATE 1821 (S/EXDIS), Priority, to AmEmbassy Saigon, Sent 1 May 1964.

FOR THE AMBASSADOR FROM THE SECRETARY

I flew up to Ottawa yesterday to talk with Mike Pearson and Martin concerning the Canadian presence in Hanoi. . . .

. . . .

They readily agreed that Seaborn should plan to spend much more time in Hanoi than have his predecessors in this assignment. They also accept as part of his mission an effort to establish ready access to and close contact with senior authorities in Hanoi, beginning with Ho Chi Minh. . . .

Following are some of the matters which we roughed out in Ottawa and which I will have further developed here. . . .

1. Seaborn should start out by checking as closely as he can what is on Ho Chi Minh's mind. We want to know whether he considers himself over-extended and exposed, or whether he feels confident that his Chinese allies will back him to the hilt. We want to know whether his current zeal is being forced upon him by pro-Chinese elements in his own camp, or whether he is impelled by his own ambitions.

2. Seaborn should get across to Ho and his colleagues the full measure of US determination to see this thing through. He should draw upon examples in other parts of the world to convince them that if it becomes necessary to enlarge the military action, this is the most probable course that the US would follow.

3. Seaborn should spread the word that he is puzzled by Hanoi's intentions. The North Vietnamese should understand that the US wants no military bases or other footholds in South Viet Nam or Laos. If Hanoi would leave its neighbors alone, the US presence in the area would diminish sharply.

4. The North Vietnamese should understand that there are many examples in which the Free World has demonstrated its willingness to live in peace with communist neighbors and to permit the establishment of normal economic relations between these two different systems. We recognize North Viet Nam's need for trade, and especially food, and consider that such needs could be fulfilled if peaceful conditions were to prevail.

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Pearson also agreed to instruct Seaborn and his people in general to work more actively on trying to break the Poles off from constant and active espousal of North Vietnamese aggression. He felt, however, that the Poles are playing something of a middle role in Sino-Soviet matters these days and doubted that there would be much profit in this.

Sullivan/RUSK

May 15, 1964

AmEmb Saigon 2212 (S/Nodis), Rec'd 15 May 64, 7:2 A.M.

FOR THE PRESIDENT FROM LODGE

. . .

. . .

3. If prior to the Canadian's trip to Hanoi there has been a terroristic act of the proper magnitude, then I suggest that a specific target in North Viet Nam be considered as a prelude to his arrival. The Vietnamese Air Force must be made capable of doing this, and they should undertake this type of action.

4. I much prefer a selective use of Vietnamese Air power to an over U.S. effort perhaps involving the total annihilation of all that has been built in North Viet Nam since 1954, because this would surely bring in the Chinese Communists, and might well bring in the Russians. Moreover, if you lay the whole country waste, it is quite likely that you will induce a mood of fatalism in the Viet Cong. Also, there will be nobody left in North Viet Nam on whom to put pressure. Furthermore, South Viet Nam's infrastructure might well be destroyed. What we are interested in here is not destroying Ho Chi Minh (as his successor would probably be worse than he is), but getting him to change his behavior. That is what President Kennedy was trying to do in October with Diem and with considerable success.

. . .

6. This is a procedure the intensity of which we can constantly control and bring up to the point to which we think the Communist reaction would cease to be manageable. It should be covert and undertaken by the Vietnamese, but, of course, we must be clear in our own minds that we are ready and able to take care of whatever reaction there may be.

7. It is easy for us on the one hand to ignore our superiority as we did at the time of Berlin in 1948 (when we still had sole possession of the atomic bomb). It is also a relatively simple concept to go out and destroy North Viet Nam. What is complicated,

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but really effective, is to bring our power to bear in a precise way so as to get specific results.

8. Another advantage of this procedure is that when, as and if the time ever came that our military activities against the North became overt, we would be in a strong moral position both with regard to U.S. public opinion, the U.S. Congress, and the U.N. I say this because we would then have a record to show that we had given Ho Chi Minh fair warning to stop his murderous interference in the internal affairs of Viet Nam. Not only would we have given him fair warning, but we would have given him honest and valuable inducements in the way of some withdrawal of American personnel and in the way of economic aid, notably food. . . .

. . . .

LODGE

May 22, 1964

STATE 2049 to AmEmb SAIGON (TS/NODIS), Priority, Sent 22 May 64, 7:40 P.M.

LITERALLY EYES ONLY FOR AMBASSADOR FROM SECRETARY

. . . .

2. . . . in light of present Canadian attitudes we tend to see real difficulty in approaching the Canadians at this time with any message as specific as you suggest, i.e., that Hanoi be told by the Canadians "that they will be punished." But we are keeping this in mind and will see whether we can go further when we consult them next week than the more general type of message stated in my 1821. As you can see, the more specific message might lead us into a very difficult dialogue with the Canadians as to just what our plans really were.

3. On the othe question, whether initial substantial attacks could be left without acknowledgement, it is our present view here that this would simply not be feasible. . . . Once such publicity occurred, I think you can see that the finger would point straight at us and that the President would then be put in perhaps a far more difficult position toward the American public and the Congress.

4. Thus, we are using a GVN- or US-acknowledged enterprise as part of our main planning track at the present time, although we do recognize that something a little stronger than the present OPLAN 34-A might be carried on on the basis you propose.

. . . .

BUNDY

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May 25, 1964

AmEmbassy SAIGON 2305 (TS/Nodis), Rec'd 25 May 64, 5:22 AM.

LITERALLY EYES ONLY FOR THE SECRETARY FROM LODGE

1. It is not rpt not at all necessary that the Canadians either agree or disagree. What is important is that the Canadian transmit the message and be willing to do that and report back accurately what is said. . . .

2. The Communists have a great advantage over us in that they do things and never talk about them. We must not rpt not let them continue to have this advantage. . . .

. . .

LODGE

May 26, 1964

AmEmbassy SAIGON 2318 (TS/Nodis), Rec'd 26 May 64, 3:30 A.M.

LITERALLY EYES ONLY FOR THE SECRETARY FROM LODGE

1. . . .

2. I am coming to the conclusion that we cannot reasonably and prudently expect a much better performance out of the GVN than that which we are now getting unless something new of this kind is brought into the picture. . . .

LODGE

May 30, 1964

STATE 2133 to Amembassy SAIGON (TS/Exdis), Priority, Sent 30 May 1964, 10:40 A.M.

FOR THE AMBASSADOR FROM THE ACTING SECRETARY

President and Mac Bundy met May 28 in New York with Canadian Prime Minister Pearson. Simultaneously Sullivan met in Ottawa with Foreign Minister Martin, Deputy Under Secretary Smith, and ICC Commissioner-Designate Seaborn.

President told Pearson that he wishes Hanoi to know, that while he is a man of peace, he does not intend to permit the North Vietnamese to take over Southeast Asia. He needs a confidential and responsible interlocutor to carry the message of US attitudes to Hanoi. In outlining the US position there was some discussions of QTE carrots and sticks UNQUOTE.

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Pearson, after expressing willingness to lend Canadian good offices to this endeavor, indicated some concern about this nature of the QTE sticks UNQTE. He stipulated that he would have great reservations about the use of nuclear weapons, but indicated that the punitive striking of discriminate targets by careful iron bomb attacks would be QTE a different thing UNQTE. He said he would personally understand our resort to such measures if the messages transmitted through the Canadian channel failed to produce any alleviation of North Vietnamese aggression, and that Canada would transmit messages around this framework.

In Ottawa Sullivan found much the same disposition among Canadian officials. While Foreign Minister Martin seemed a little nervous about the prospect of QTE expanding the war UNQTE, External Affairs officials readily assented to the use of Seaborn as an interlocutor.

Seaborn, who struck Sullivan as an alert, intelligent and steady officer, readily agreed to these conditions and has made immediate plans for an accelerated departure. . . .

. . . .  
BALL

June 1, 1964

Memo To: G - Mr. U. Alexis Johnson, from S/VN - Joseph A. Mendelhall, dated June 1, 1964 (TS)

Subject: Instructions for Canadian Interlocutor with Hanoi.

I am enclosing a copy of the "Outline of Subjects for Mr. Seaborn" which Bill Sullivan prepared prior to departure for Honolulu. He gave a copy of this general paper of instructions to Mr. Robinson, Minister-Counselor of the Canadian Embassy, on May 30.

At your request I have prepared and am enclosing a draft of a further outline in specific terms of the message which we would expect the Canadian interlocutor to get across in Hanoi. This further outline is based on the assumptions that (a) a U.S. decision has been taken to act against North Viet-Nam and (b) we plan to use "carrots" as well as a "stick" on Hanoi. I believe that we would probably not wish to hand this further outline to the Canadian Government pending the initial soundings of the Canadian interlocutor in Hanoi pursuant to Mr. Sullivan's original set of instructions.

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. . .

Enclosures:

1. Outline of Subjects for Mr. Seaborn.
2. Further Outline for Mr. Seaborn.

OUTLINE OF SUBJECTS FOR MR. SEABORN

1. The President wishes Hanoi to understand that he is fundamentally a man of peace. However, he does not intend to let the North Vietnamese take over all of Southeast Asia. He wishes to have a highly confidential, responsible interlocutor who will deliver this message to the authorities in Hanoi and report back their reaction.

2. The messages which may be transmitted through this channel would involve an indication of the limitations both upon US ambitions in Southeast Asia and upon US patience with Communist provocation. The interlocutor of his Government need not agree with nor associate themselves with the messages that are passed. The only requirement is that there be faithful transmittal of the messages in each direction.

3. Mr. Seaborn should arrive in Hanoi as soon as possible and establish his credentials as a political personality who can and will deal with senior representatives of the Hanoi regime.

4. Mr. Seaborn should also, by listening to the arguments and observing the attitudes of the North Vietnamese, form an evaluation of their mental outlook. He should be particularly alert to (a) differences with respect to the Sino-Soviet split, (b) frustration of war weariness, (c) indications of North Vietnamese desire for contacts with the West, (d) evidences of cliques or factions in the Party or Government, and (e) evidence of differences between the political and the military.

5. Mr. Seaborn should explore the nature and the prevalence of Chinese Communist influence in North Viet Nam; and perhaps through direct discussions with the Soviet representatives, evaluate the nature and influence of the Soviets.

6. Mr. Seaborn should stress to appropriate North Vietnamese officials that US policy is to see to it that North Viet Nam contains itself and its ambitions within the territory allocated to its administration by the 1954 Geneva Agreements. He should stress that US policy in South Viet Nam is to preserve the integrity of that state's territory against guerrilla subversion.

7. He should state that the US does not seek military bases in the area and that the US is not seeking to overthrow the Communist regime in Hanoi.

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8. He should stipulate that the US is fully aware of the degree to which Hanoi controls and directs the guerrilla action in South Viet Nam and that the US holds Hanoi directly responsible for that action. He should similarly indicate US awareness of North Vietnamese control over the Pathet Lao movement in Laos and the degree of North Vietnamese involvement in that country. He should specifically indicate US awareness of North Vietnamese violations of Laotian territory along the infiltration route into South Viet Nam.

9. Mr. Seaborn should point out that the nature of US commitment in South Viet Nam is not confined to the territorial issue in question. He should make it clear that the US considers the confrontation with North Vietnamese subversive guerrilla action as part of the general Free World confrontation with this type of violent subversion in other lesser developed countries. Therefore, the US stake in resisting a North Vietnamese victory in South Viet Nam has a significance of world-wide proportions.

10. Mr. Seaborn can point to the many examples of US policy in tolerance of peaceful coexistence with Communist regimes, such as Yugoslavia, Poland, etc. He can hint at the economic and other benefits which have accrued to those countries because their policy of Communism has confined itself to the development of their own national territories and has not sought to expand into other areas.

11. Mr. Seaborn can couple this statement with the frank acknowledgement that US public and official patience with North Vietnamese aggression is growing extremely thin.

12. Insofar as Mr. Seaborn considers it might be educational he could review the relative military strengths of the US, North Viet Nam, and the available resources of Communist China in Southeast Asia.

13. In sum, the purpose of Mr. Seaborn's mission in North Viet Nam would be as an interlocutor with both active and passive functions. On the passive side, he should report either observations or direct communications concerning North Vietnamese attitude toward extrication from or escalation of military activities. On the active side, he should establish his credentials with the North Vietnamese as an authoritative channel of communications with the US. In each of these functions it would be hoped that Mr. Seaborn would assume the posture that the decision as to the future course of events in Southeast Asia rests squarely with Hanoi.

FURTHER OUTLINE FOR MR. SEABORN

1. The U.S. objective is to maintain the independence and territorial integrity of South Viet-Nam. This means that the South Vietnamese Government in Saigon must be able to exercise its authority throughout the territory south of the 17th Parallel without encountering armed resistance directed and supported by Hanoi.

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2. We know that Hanoi can stop the war in South Viet-Nam if it will do so. The virtually complete cease-fires which have obtained at Tet time for the past two years demonstrate the ability of Hanoi to control all Viet Cong operations in South Viet-Nam if it has the will to do so.

3. In order to stop the war in South Viet-Nam the United States is prepared to follow alternative courses of action with respect to North Viet-Nam.

(a) Unless Hanoi stops the war within a specified time period (i.e., ceases all attacks, acts of terror, sabotage or armed propaganda or other armed resistance to government authority by the VC), the United States will initiate action by air and naval means against North Viet-Nam until Hanoi does agree to stop the war.

(b) If Hanoi will agree to stop the war, the United States will take the following steps:

(1) Undertake to obtain the agreement of Saigon to a resumption of trade between North Viet-Nam and South Viet-Nam, which would be helpful to North Viet-Nam in view of the complementarity of the two zones of Viet-Nam and the food difficulties now suffered by North Viet-Nam.

(2) Initiate a program of foodstuffs assistance to North Viet-Nam either on a relief grant basis under Title II of Public Law 480 or on a sales for local currency basis under Title I PL-480 (as in Poland and Yugoslavia).

(3) Remove U.S. foreign assets controls from the assets of North Viet-Nam and reduce controls on U.S. trade with North Viet-Nam to the level now applicable to the USSR (i.e., strategic items only).

(4) Recognize North Viet-Nam diplomatically and, if Hanoi is interested, undertake an exchange of diplomatic representatives.

(5) Remove U.S. forces from South Viet-Nam on a phased basis, winding up with a reduction to the level of 350 military advisors or trainers as permitted under the Geneva Accords. (This was the number of U.S. military personnel in Viet-Nam when the Geneva Accords were signed in 1954.)

4. If Hanoi stops resistance in South Viet-Nam, the United States and South Vietnamese Governments will permit Hanoi to withdraw any Viet Cong personnel whom it may wish from South Viet-Nam. The Government of South Viet-Nam will also make a clear public announcement of full amnesty for all rebels who discontinue armed resistance to the authority of the Government.

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5. If Hanoi agrees to cease resistance, the order from Hanoi to the Viet Cong units and personnel can be issued, if Hanoi prefers, either publicly or confidentially through the communications channels from Hanoi to the Viet Cong. The test the U.S. will apply will be whether or not all armed resistance to the authority of the Government at Saigon actually stops.

6. Timetable for these actions:

(a) All hostilities must cease within one week of the approach to the authorities at Hanoi. If they have not stopped within that time, the U.S. will immediately initiate air and naval action against North Viet-Nam.

(b) If agreement is reached between the U.S. and North Viet-Nam on the cessation of resistance in South Viet-Nam, the cessation of hostilities will be preceded by a general GVN amnesty announcement.

(c) If the DRV desires to repatriate Viet Cong from South Viet-Nam, this can be done over whatever period the DRV desires.

(d) If the DRV desires to announce an agreement publicly with the United States, the entire package of measures on both sides can be announced within three days of the complete cessation of hostilities. If the DRV does not desire a public announcement of its agreement to have the Viet Cong cease resistance, then the United States measures of concession to North Viet-Nam can be announced only over a phased period starting one week from the complete cessation of hostilities. Announcement of all steps taken by the U.S. as concessions to North Viet-Nam would be completed by three months from the cessation of hostilities.

(e) U.S. forces would be removed from South Viet-Nam on a phased basis over a period of one year from the date of cessation of resistance to the Government of South Viet-Nam. At the end of one year U.S. military personnel would be down to the 350 permitted by the Geneva Accords.

June 8, 1964

STATE 2205 to Amembassy Saigon (TS/Exdis), Priority, Sent Jun 7, 64 7:55 PM

REF: Embtel 2434

Seaborn has been given condensed outline version May 22 Talking Paper drafted by Sullivan. Believe it might be confusing if original paper itself also given Seaborn and would suggest you cover substance orally in order indicate general concurrence Washington-Saigon views this subject.

RUSK

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June 18, 1964

STATE 115 to Amembassy SAIGON (TS/Exdis), Sent Jul 11, 1964, 5:19 P.M.

Embtel 74.

As requested final paragraph reftel, texts first two Seaborn messages sent Ottawa follow:

1. June 20, 1964 message.

QTE. Initial visit to Hanoi: Call on PM Pham Van Dong.

PM received me for hour and a half Thurs morning Jun 18 with only Lt Col Mai Lam, number two man of PAVN liaison mission, present. Conversation was entirely in French with no RPT no use of Vietnamese and interpretation which had been practice in earlier lower level calls on Vice Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs.

2. After very brief preliminaries, I told PM that I had on instructions specially requested interview with him and/or President Ho Chi Minh as I had oral msg to convey from PM Pearson. Perhaps best explanation was to be found in my TSEC instructions from my PM which I was authorized to show him. Pham Van Dong read let of May 30 from PM Pearson to myself carefully once and then quickly again. He said he greatly appreciated role Canada had undertaken to play, which he felt was important and desirable, and wished me also personal success in task. From tone of conversation thereafter, I believe Pham Van Dong has understood and accepted and perhaps welcomed my role as intermediary.

3. I said that I hoped he would let me elaborate on very general lines of my instructions from PM and in effect to convey to him first general msg from USA Govt. I prefaced msg by citing our close and friendly relationship with USA, our good understanding of American intentions and aspirations, and our constant detailed and intimate exchange of views and info with USA which gave us excellent insight into American thinking. On this basis, we were convinced that President Johnson was man of peace, that he would take pains to avoid and avert situations which could lead to confrontation between major powers, but that insofar as Southeast Asia was concerned he was determined that it would not RPT not fall under Communist control as result of subversion and guerrilla warfare. Intentions in Southeast Asia were essentially peaceful and USA ambitions were limited, but USA was also determined and its patience before provocation was not RPT not limitless.

4. This said, I went on to convey USA msg, following as closely as I could, though not RPT not necessarily in same order, points made in paras 6 through 11 of WASHDC tel 1951 May 30. In course of conversation, I made all these points explicitly and without circumlocution



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and in some cases with elaboration and repetition. I shall not RPT not therefore repeat them in this tel. I did not RPT not specifically make point in para 12 other than to say that if conflict in area should escalate, which I did not RPT not think was in anyone's interest, the greatest devastation would of course result for the DRVN itself.

5. I am convinced from later conversation that Pham Van Dong understood importance and context of msg I conveyed and seriousness with which USA views situation in Southeast Asia. To that extent, initial purpose of first contact has been successfully accomplished, he gave me careful hearing with no RPT no attempt to interrupt, disagree, contradict or even express displeasure even to assertions which were clearly unpalatable or with which he would not RPT not agree, e.g. Viet Minh complicity in Pathet Lao activities and SVN insurgency and DRVN responsibility for future development of situation in area. This is not RPT not of course to say that I convinced him of correctness of USA interpretations (which obviously I did not RPT not) nor that he fully believes even yet firmness and durability of USA determination in area. He could not RPT not however claim that he has not RPT not had USA views and intentions conveyed to him most explicitly.

6. I concluded opening statement by saying I was at Prime Minister's disposal now or at any later stage to convey to USA via Ottawa any msg he wished to give me orally or in writing. He said he had no RPR no immediate and specific msg to send at this time, but that he would like to expound on DRVN point of view with particular ref to points I had raised in my comment. I shall be sending subsequently detailed report, based on notes made as he talked, of Prime Minister's remarks in his main statement and in course of subsequent discussion. In his initial tel however I shall merely summarize what appears to me to be his main points and give my first impressions.

7. Pham Van Dong opened remarks by saying we must learn to coexist and to find solution to problem which has wracked Indochina for 25 years. But just solution is only way to provide stability. What just solution means in DRVN is, as President Ho Chi Minh has explained (A) USA withdrawal (B) peace and neutrality for SVN in Cambodian pattern in accordance with programme of Liberation Front which must participate in determination of Vietnam as result of negotiation when SVN ready for negotiation.

8. PM said USA must demonstrate what he would consider good will but he realized it will not RPT not be easy for USA to do so. USA can increase aid to SVN in all fields, give greater material support to SVN army and increase its own army personnel also. If so, war will be prolonged and intensified, but QTE our people UNQTE will go on struggling and resisting. QTE It is impossible for westerners to understand

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strength of people's will to resist, to continue, to struggle. It has astonished us too UNQTE. Prospect for USA and friends is QTE sans issue UNQTE. SVN mercenaries and USA soldiers do not RPT not have heart in fighting whereas support for objective of Liberation Front is growing among Buddhists, students, intellectuals. Lippmann sees no RPT no light at end of tunnel and others speak of new Dien Bien Phu.

9. DRVN Govt, said PM, did not RPT not yet have concrete suggestions to put forward, but this was general line of their thinking.

10. In separate tel without "Bacon" restrictions I shall report in greater detail PM's comments on Laos situation. Essence of his remarks was (A) only viable solution was return to status quo ante April coup d'etat and Govt. of National Coalition as per Geneva Accord of 1962 (B) necessity of convening 14 nation conference to achieve this result and (C) essentiality of no RPT no American interference in Laos. He said DRVN was very worried by step-up of USA military activities in Laos and complained of USA overflights of DRVN territory and of commando raids across border. He denied that PAVN had sent QTE units UNQTE across border to aid Pathet Lao but did not RPT not specifically deny my earlier statement that USA was aware DRVN were helping Pathet Lao and Viet Cong with men, arms and material.

11. Returning to question of SVN, Pham Van Dong said situation could be summed up as choice between QTE guerre a outrance UNQTE which USA cannot RPT not win in any event in the long run or alternatively neutrality for SVN.

12. I thanked PM for detailed expose of DRVN views which I said I would transmit faithfully to my govt. At this he said disarmingly that i might not RPT not believe all he had said but he wanted to assure me he has spoken in all sincerity and frankness. I shall not RPT not be so rash as to comment on this other than to say that he took pains throughout interview to give impression of quiet sincerity, of realization of seriousness of what we were discussing and of lack of truculence of belligerency. Certainly in presence and mental stature PM is head and shoulders above few other North Vietnamese whom I met and undoubtedly an impressive Communist personality by any standards.

13. At this stage I told PM I had no RPT no further formal message to convey but that I would like to put a few personal comments and questions.

14 I said I was interested to hear from him that as a condition for restoring peace SVN should become neutral as a first step prior to reunification. He stopped me and said he had not RPT not referred to neutrality as a first step only. Whether SVN would continue neutral would depend upon people of SVN. He did not RPT nor prejudge. As for Liberation Front I said I realized it represents a certain force in SVN, though not RPT not in my view all people as the propaganda asserted nor even majority. He did not RPR not demur at this downgrading. I said I appreciated that the Front would have to

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participate should a coalition ever emerge. My fear however was that coalition would soon be taken over by Front as had happened in other countries and that other rep elements would suffer or be ousted. PM merely said there was no RPT no reason to have such fears.

15. I then asked whether PM appreciated fully that USA's continued acceptance of obligations towards allies in SVN had implications which extended far beyond Southeast Asia and related to USA determination to resist guerrilla subversion in Asia, Africa and Latin-America? PM laughed and said he did indeed appreciate it. A USA defeat in SVN would in all probability start a chain reaction which would extend much farther, but USA should understand that principles and stakes involved were just as high for Liberation Front in SVN and its supporters and this helped to explain their determination to continue to struggle regardless of sacrifice.

16. PM said he was glad to hear that USA did not RPT not have aggressive intentions against DRVN and did not RPT not intend to attack it. I corrected him at this point and said USA did not RPT not want to carry war to north but might be obliged to do so if pushed too far by continuation of Viet Minh-assisted pressures in SVN. I repeated that USA patience was not RPT not limitless. PM said if war was pushed to north, QTE nous sommes un pays socialistes, un des pays socialistes, vous savez, et le peuple se dressera UNQTE. (This was the closest he came at any time to hinting that DRVN could or would count on outside assistance in event of attack). But, he said, we shall not RPT not provoke them.

17. Conversation had now continued for almost hour and a half and PM made move as if to terminate, so I did not RPT not put further questions. He asked me to send greetings to PM Pearson and to say that if my mission could contribute to this (grp missing) solution Canada would have done something very useful. I said I felt it was at minimum essential that no RPT no irrevocable steps be taken due to misunderstanding of intentions and objectives and that USA felt this strongly too. PM agreed, and said he looked forward to further conversation during my next (grp missing) when I would certainly meet Ho Chi Minh. President was on leave at present but had send greetings. I closed by thanking him for time given me and repeating I was at his disposal anytime he wished to see me.

18. In separate msg I shall report first very tentative impressions on questions asked in paras four and five of WASHDC tel 1951 May 30.

19. I expect to be seeing Mr. Lodge shortly after my return to Saigon (this tel is being drafted in plane enroute from Hanoi) and will show him copy.

20. I would welcome comments from you and State Department and any suggestions for talking points for further conversations on next visit to Hanoi. END QUOTE

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2. June 22, 1964 message.

QUOTE. DRVN: Attitudes and Outlook.

To convey specific msg and to report DRVN comment is relatively simple. To attempt evaluation suggested paras 4 and 5 WASHDC tel 1951 May 30 is extremely difficult on basis of 3 day visit and a few conversations especially for someone who has never had previous direct experience with Asia let alone Vietnam. Following comments, to be read in conjunction with my reftel, are therefore highly tentative and consist mainly of negative evidence.

Sino-Soviet split and prevalence of Chinese Communist influence:

2. No RPT no Vietnamese with whom I spoke made even ref by name to USSR or China. My enquiry of Vice-Foreign Minister Tien as to DRVN views on latest Soviet call for mtg on world CPS drew reply that question concerned party only and was not RPT not within competence of Foreign Ministry. To direct question he said DRVN had not RPT not commented on latest Moscow call but general views could be found in press. Eastern Europeans were closed mouthed on this issue. PM made only most oblique ref to DRVN's membership in group of socialist countries in context of possible results of USA taking war to north.

3. French Del Gen Debuzon asserts DRVN leaders are honestly concerned by bad effect of split on fortunes of World Communist Movement and have avoided polemics against USSR even when adopting Peking line. He thinks they fear definitive rupture which would (throw?) them fully under Chinese control, a fate they hope to resist as long as possible. They are not RPT not however strong enough to play dispute for their own purposes as have Romanians.

4. In economic field, probes with Vietnamese and Eastern Europeans were little more rewarding. Strong Vietnamese emphasis at present in official propaganda and in private conversation is on lifting up by own boot-straps and near autarchy. During lengthy tour of exhibition of ten years of DRVN, guide RPT guide managed to describe economic progress for at least half hour without once mentioning aid received from other socialist countries, (though?) when questioned Director admitted it had been great with lion's share by USSR and China. Reps of smaller Eastern European powers told me of their relatively modest aid and trade but would not RPT not be drawn on relative weight of Soviet and Chinese aid. Soviet Charge said that Soviet aid in form of technicians and training of students in USSR had diminished as DRVN capacity for training own cadres had grown. He admitted Chinese were still very active in aid field but would not RPT not be specific.

5. Foreign rep in Hanoi tell me Chinese technicians ETC are not RPT not much in evidence but this proves little. Unskilled eye can easily fail to distinguish between North Vietnamese and Southern Chinese.

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Cliques in factions in Party or Govt:

6. I can add nothing from observation or conversation in Hanoi to analysis of commonly accepted line-up of pro-Chinese extremists and pro-Soviet moderates other than to draw attention to moderateness of Pham Van Dong's tone during interview of Ho Chi Minh appears still to enjoy tremendous prestige and is venerated as demi-God, perhaps above any factional strife, non-Communist reps in Hanoi and Nationalist Chinese Ambassador here warn against overemphasis on factionalism as (something?) from which West might derive benefit. National pride is apparent from Pham Van Dong's remarks and from call for economic self-help.

Differences between political and military:

7. I can adduce no RPT no evidence one way or the other.

Frustration or war weariness:

8. I can bring forward no RPT no evidence that such (exists?) and indeed all Vietnamese emphasized quiet determination to go on struggling as long as necessary to achieve in long run. While some discount should perhaps be made for fact they were speaking to me, these assertions carried a good deal of conviction as if really believed. This applies particularly strongly to Pham Van.

9. Hanoi itself though austere looked much less run down than I expected. Team site officers and others who have been north over course of year say supply of consumer goods while still pitifully small (has?) increased markedly. I saw some queues but no RPT no evidence of malnutrition nor RPT nor did I find people looking markedly sadder or more serious than those in south. Team site officers have seen no RPT no evidence of over discontent among people.

Desire for contacts with West:

10. Pham Van Dong seemed genuinely grateful for intermediary role Canada was trying to plan and also I think for USA desire to get msg through. It will take subsequent visits to decide whether this reflects interest in or desire to emerge from isolation, let alone interest in any accommodation or settlement of Laos and SVN problem.

Conclusions.

11. Tentative conclusion is that we would be unwise at this stage to count on war weariness or factionalism within leadership or possible material advantages to DRVN or kind of Asian Tito-ism as of such importance to cause DRVN to jump at chance of reaching accommodation with USA in this area. Certainly on my brief visit I detected no RPT no evidence to suggest (as some solumnists have been doing) that starvation, war weariness and political discontent are bringing regime close to collapse and that they would therefore grasp at any straw which might enable them to save something before country falls apart.

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12. Prospect of war being carried to north may give greater pause for thought. But I would hesitate to say that DRVN are yet convinced, despite USA public statements and moves and private msg I have conveyed, that USA really would be prepared to take this step, ultimate consequences of which could be start of World War III. I am also inclined to think that DRVN leaders are completely convinced that military action at any level is not RPT not going to bring success for USA and Govt forces in SVN. They are almost as completely convinced that Khanh Govt is losing ground on political front and are confident that in fullness of time success is assured for Liberation Front supported by DRVN.

13. I would however caution on the extreme difficulty of forming meaningful judgements on basis of brief or even longer period spent in North Vietnam, which is a singularly closed society even by Communist standards. Press is very uninformative and I suspect that most foreign reps including those of Eastern Europe know little of what is going on. Soviet and Chinese Ambassadors are probably only ones taken at all into DRVN confidence and councils and I am not RPT not sanguine about former, who was unfortunately absent during my visit, opening up to me at least on first mtg. I shall persevere of course with foreign reps and North Vietnamese but the limitations should be fully understood.

END QUOTE

BALL

Remarks of Prime Minister Pham Van Dong  
to J.B. Seahorn, Hanoi, June 18, 1964

. . . .

President Ho Chi Minh has explained what we mean by a just solution. First it requires an American withdrawal from Indochina. Secondly it means that the affairs of the South must be arranged by the people of the South. It must provide for the participation of the Liberation Front. No other group represents the broad wishes of the people. The programme of the Front is the best one possible. There must be peace and neutrality for South Vietnam, neutrality in the Cambodian manner. Thirdly, a just solution means re-unification of the country. This is a "drame, national, fondamentale". But we want peaceful reunification, without military pressures. We want peaceful reunification, without military pressures. We want negotiation 'round a table. There must be sincere satisfaction with the arrangement for it to be viable. We are in no hurry. We are willing to talk but we shall wait till SVN is ready. We are a divided people, without even personal links across the dividing line.

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The United States must show good will, but it is not easy for the USA to do so. Meanwhile the war intensifies. USA aid may increase in all areas, not only for the SVN army but in terms of USA army personnel as well. I suffer to see the war go on, develop, intensify. Yet our people are determined to struggle. It is impossible, quite impossible (excuse me for saying this) for you Westerners to understand the force of the people's will to resist and to continue. The struggle of the people exceeds the imagination. It has astonished us too.

Since the fall of the Ngo brothers, it has been a "cascade". The prospect for the USA and its friends in SVN is "sans issu". Reinforcing the Khanh army doesn't count. The people have had enough. The SVN mercenaries have sacrificed themselves without honour. The Americans are not loved, for they commit atrocities. How can the people suffer such exactions and terror?

. . . .

Let me stress, insofar as the internal situation in SVN is concerned, the realistic nature of the Liberation Front's programme. It is impossible to have a representative government which excludes the Front. The idea of a government of national coalition "fait boule de neige" in the South. The Laos pattern of 1962 should serve as a guide for SVN.

As for Laos, we are not reassured by the USA role. We must return to the '62 Geneva Accord. The present government of Laos is "fantoche". Souvanna Phouma, who is no better than a prisoner of the military, has acted like a coward. His present government provides no solution.

We do not send units to the Pathet Lao. We do not demand more than a return to the situation which existed prior to the April coup. But there must be no American interference in Laos. There are daily incursions of our air space across the Laotian border by overflights of military aircraft and by commande units bent on sabotage.

. . . .

A new conference of the fourteen parties is necessary. Restoration of peace and neutrality for Laos are impossible otherwise. There is little utility in the Polish proposal. Only the 14-nation conference is competent to deal with the Laos situation.

To return to Vietnam, it is a question of a "guerre a outrance", which the USA won't win in any event, or neutrality. He had not (as I had suggested) referred to neutrality as a first step only. Whether SVN would continue neutral would depend upon the people of SVN. He did not prejudge the issue.

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The DRVN realize that the "loss" of SVN for the Americans would set off (what was the atomic expression?) a chain reaction which would extend much further. The USA is in a difficult position, because Khanh's troops will no longer fight. If the war gets worse, we shall suffer greatly but we shall win. If we win in the South, the people of the world will turn against the USA. Our people will therefore accept the sacrifice, whatever they may be. But the DRVN will not enter the war.

If the war were pushed to the North, "nous sommes un pays socialiste, vous savez et le peuple se dressera". But we shall not force the USA, we shall not provoke the USA.

As far as the ICC is concerned, we are very glad to have you here. But don't put too many items on the agenda, don't give yourself too much work to do.

August 8, 1964

STATE 169 to Amembassy OTTAWA, STATE 383 to Amembassy SAIGON, Immediate, (TS/Exdis), Sent 8 Aug 64, 4:41 P.M.

Following message was handed directly to Canadian Embassy here for transmittal to Seaborn by fastest channel. This is for your information only.

QUOTE Canadians are urgently asked to have Seaborn during August 10 visit make following points (as having been conveyed to him by US Government since August 6):

A. Re Tonkin Gulf actions, which almost certainly will come up:

1. . . . Neither the MADDIX or any other destroyer was in any way associated with any attack on the DRV islands.

2. Regarding the August 4 attack by the DRV on the two US destroyers, the Americans were and are at a complete loss to understand the DRV motive. . . . About the only reasonable hypothesis was that North Viet-Nam was intent either upon making it appear that the United States was a INNER QUOTE paper tiger END INNER QUOTE or upon provoking the United States.

3. The American response was directed solely to patrol craft and installations acting in direct support of them. As President Johnson stated : INNER QUOTE Our response for the present will be limited and fitting. END INNER QUOTE

4. In view of uncertainty aroused by the deliberate and unprovoked DRV attacks this character, US has necessarily carried out precautionary deployments of additional air power to SVN and Thailand.



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B. Re basic American position:

. . .

9. Mr. Seaborn should conclude with the following new points:

a. That the events of the past few days should add credibility to the statement made last time, that INNER QUOTE US public and official patience with North Vietnamese aggression is growing extremely thin. END INNER QUOTE

b. That the US Congressional Resolutions was passed with near unanimity, strongly re-affirming the unity and determination of the US Government and people not only with respect to any further attacks on US military forces but more broadly to continue to oppose firmly, by all necessary means, DRV efforts to subvert and conquer South Viet-Nam and Laos.

c. That the US has come to the view that the DRV role in South Viet-Nam and Laos is critical. If the DRV persists in its present course, it can expect to continue to suffer the consequences.

d. That the DRV knows what it must do if the peace is to be restored.

e. That the US has ways and means of measuring the DRV's participation in, and direction and control of, the war on South Viet-Nam and in Laos and will be carefully watching the DRV's response to what Mr. Seaborn is telling them. UNQUOTE.

RUSK

August 9, 1964

STATE 389 to Amembassy SAIGON (TS/Exdis) Flash, Sent 9 Aug 64, 6:42 A.M.

REF Saigon 362, repeated Info as Saigon 8 to Ottawa

. . . request you immediately contact Seaborn with view to deleting two words QUOTE to continue UNQUOTE from last sentence paragraph 9 c.

RUSK

August 18, 1964

SAIGON 467 to SecState (TS/Exdis) Priority, Rec'd 18 Aug 64, 2:07 P.M.

Deptel 383

Seaborn called on Sullivan August 17 to show him copies his reports (which presumably Dept has seen) concerning his recent visit to Hanoi. As Dept probably aware, Seaborn was under instructions

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omit last two points reftel in his discussions with Pham Van Dong, but otherwise feels he made all points practically verbatim.

Principal observation which Seaborn expressed re his conversation was sense satisfaction that Phan Van Dong, despite his angry reaction to Seaborn presentation, was unhesitating in his statement that channel of communication to US should stay open and that Seaborn should continue to bear US messages, no RPT no matter how unpleasant they may be.

. . .

TAYLOR

---

August 17, 1964

Report of Conversation with Prime Minister Pham Van Dong-  
Hanoi, August 13, 1964

(The following is close to a verbatim account of Prime Minister Pham Van Dong's remarks.)

2. We wish to have the best possible relations with the I.C.C.

. . .

3. . . . The Government of the U.S.A. is obliged to carry out aggression against us. Official circles both political and military have decided that it is necessary to carry the war to the north in order to find a way out of the impasse in which they find themselves in the south. This is their goal and they have been pushed by it into attacking us. We see in this fact the essential cause of the act of aggression of August 5. . . .

4. President Johnson worries also of course about the coming electoral battle in which it is necessary to outbid the Republican candidate. Hence the attempt to internationalize the war.

5. If we throw light in this way on the real reasons for the incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin, it enables us to make some evaluation of what the situation may be in the future. The essential causes, that is to say, remain and it is therefore possible that the Government of the U.S.A. will be led to new acts of aggression. They have said it themselves.

6. This is a very dangerous situation, I repeat a very dangerous situation. . . . There is no way out in the south and they are trying to carry the war to the north as a way out. That is the real miscalculation. Up to now we have tried to avoid serious trouble; but it becomes more difficult now because the war has been carried to our territory. . . .

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7. . . . We are a socialist country and socialist countries will come to our aid. . . .

8. If the U.S.A. is thinking of a new Korean war it should realize that conditions are not the same. . . . If the war comes to North Vietnam, it will come to the whole of Southeast Asia, with unforeseeable consequences. . . . We do not hide the fact that the people will have to make many sacrifices, but we are in a state of legitimate defence because the war is imposed upon us.

9. . . .

10. The solution lies in a return to the Geneva Agreement of 1954. . . .

11. The I.C.C. is called upon to play a more and more important role. . . .

12. . . .

August 19, 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Secretary

FROM: S/VN - Michael V. Forrestal

THROUGH: S/S

Herewith the second installment of the Seaborn talks.

The verbatim account of the conversation still remains to come from Ottawa.

Attachment

Fm Candel SAIGON TSec Bacon (TS/Eyes Only/No Dis), Immed.,

(For Immediate Delivery to Arnold Smith and FarEast Div)

Ref OurTel 419, Aug 15

Pham Van Dong's angry reaction to latest USA msg is not RPT not surprising. . . .

2. After visit to Hanoi and interview with PM I am still little wiser as to DRVN motivations in launching Aug 2 and Aug'4 attacks on USA vessels. . . . They may also believe, despite President Johnson's reassurances, that there is chance of new USA attack even if they do

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not RPT not provoke it. Again, they are at least acting as if this were their estimate and are taking various precautionary measures (air raid drills, slit trenches, brick bunkers, etc. and reportedly at least preparation for evacuation of women and children).

3. . . .

4. Pham Van Dong gave no RPT no indication of being worried by firmness of USA msg I delivered and in fact its immediate effect was to product anger rather than desire to discuss way out. But I find it mildly encouraging that he did calm down as he talked further and significant that (he?) should state unequivocally that he wanted to keep open DRVN-USA channel of communication. I do not RPT not however as result of this interview see likelihood of his using it for some time at least to put forward to USA side proposal or requests for discussion. I think he is genuinely convinced that things are bound to go his way in Indochina and that there is therefore no RPT no need to seek compromises.

5. . . .

SEABORN

December 3, 1964

STATE 1210 to Amembassy SAIGON, STATE 645 to Amembassy OTTAWA, Immediate, (Top S/Exdis), Sent 3 Dec 64, 6:51 P.M.

The following message has been handed directly to Canadian Embassy here for transmittal to Seaborn through fastest channel. This is for your information only.

Quote: Canadians are asked to have Seaborn take following position during his next visit to Hanoi which, we understand, is currently scheduled for December 7th or 10th (Embtel 1618).

The United States has nothing to add to the points made by Seaborn on his last visit to Hanoi in August. All the recent indications from Washington, however, point to a continued and increasing determination on the part of the US to assist the South Vietnamese in their struggle. Although he has no specific message on this trip, Seaborn has noted from its public statements increased US concern at DRV role in direct support of Viet Cong, and this together with reported high-level meetings Washington makes him feel that time is ripe for any new message Hanoi may wish to convey.

Seaborn should convey attitude of real personal concern over the growing possibility of direct confrontation between GVN and DRV. End quote.

FYI: Purpose of this approach is to probe for any new DRV reactions.

HARRIMAN

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Candel SAIGON 773 to Sec Bacon (TS/Nodis), Immediate,  
(For Immediate Delivery to Arnold Smith and FarEast Dov)

Ref: WashDC Tel 4189 Dec 5 and your Tel 7833 Dec 4

. . . .

2. In mtg with Havan Lau only Vietnamese personality with whom I talked, I developed theme in Wash DC Tel 4189 . . . He did not RPT not pick up directly any of these ideas. Notes were taken throughout mtg and I assume higher authorities will be informed. . . .

3. . . .

SEABORN

SAIGON 774 to TT External (Confidential), Immediate DE Delhi  
TT LDN EmbParis, Nato Paris, Geneva, Wash DD, Permisny CDS

. . . .

3. Foreign Reps with whom I spoke all referred to DRVN concern over possibility of USA air strikes, though there was differing interpretation as to how likely DRVN thought this to be. None seemed to expect anything of a serious nature to be imminent. To those who tended to play down likelihood, I cautioned against complacency and said I did not RPT not rule out possibility of air strikes in retaliation for growing DRVN complicity in SVN insurgency. I detected during this visit to Hanoi none of tension (partly officially inspired, partly genuine) which was so evident in mid-Aug just after Gulf of Tonkin incident. Not, as already reported, is there any sign of renewed digging of air-raid shelters or widespread drilling of militia.

4. . . .

8. There was general agreement as to DRVN concern lest UN become involved in IndoChina. Some Reps apparently did not RPT not think this would be deplorable development but they all agreed that DRVN would refuse to allow UN intervention. . . .

9. By and large, impression gained . . . is no RPT no expectation of early and startling developments in Vietnam. To employ the DRVN jargon, the situation is not RPT not yet ripe for it.

SEABORN

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January 29, 1965

AmEmbassy PARIS 4295 to SecState (Limdis/Noforn/S), Rec'd 29 Jan 65, 2 P.M.

EmbOff has been shown in strictest secrecy large portions of record conversations on Viet Nzm held here between ranking officials of Quai on one hand and separately with Chinese Charge Sung and North Vietnamese delegate Mai Van Bo on other. Conversation with Bo took place December 22 and was renewed again last week. . . .

In addition to discussion of international conference along Geneva lines, conversation with North Vietnamese XHIKXQK,\* essentially to three questions put by French (1) Would Hanoi accept and join in guarantees for neutral and completely independent South Vietnam? (2) Would Hanoi agree to knock off political and military subversion in SVN? (3) Would Hanoi accept some control mechanism more serious and with wider powers than present ICC? Total ineffectiveness of latter and paralysis through veto demonstrated, especially in Laos.

Mai Van Bo showed considerable interest in (1) and (3) and spoke of settling on basis 1954 Geneva Accords but was obviously embarrassed and evasive on (2), since affirmative response would have constituted confession. French told Bo frankly they could not accept Vietnamese protestations that there was only American intervention and that French were convinced of Hanoi subversive role. If Hanoi did not wish to own up, would they at least undertake guarantee not to engage in such activities in future?

At second meeting in January above questions explored further and French said that in order to discuss meaningfully, Bo should obtain precise answers from Hanoi on above three points. No answer yet received.

. . . .

\*As received, will service upon request.

February 27, 1965

STATE 942 to Amembassy OTTAWA (S/Exdis) Immediate, Sent 27 Feb 65, 4:11 P.M.

We have passed to Canadian Embassy here text of that portion of Ambassador Cabot's presentation at latest Warsaw talks dealing with Viet-Nam situation. Text as follows: QUOTE. I have been instructed to restate United States policy in South Viet-Nam. Our constant policy has been to assist South Viet-Nam in its efforts to maintain its freedom and independence in the face of Communist aggression directed and supported by Hanoi. So long as the Viet Cong, directed

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and supported by North Viet-Nam and encouraged by your side, continues its attacks in South Viet-Nam, the United States will find it necessary to afford the Government of Viet-Nam such help as it desires and needs to restore peace. The pressures being mounted by the North Vietnamese across the frontiers of South Viet-Nam are intolerable. We must and will take action to stop them.

. . .

. . . It was our hope that the 1954 Geneva arrangements would allow the Governments in Indochina to exist in peace.

. . .

We would be satisfied if the Geneva agreements of 1954 were observed by all parties. . . . Any evidence of willingness on the part of the DRV to return to these accords would be noted and welcomed by our side.

. . . If there is any doubt in Hanoi as to this U.S. position, I hope that you will convey it to them. UNQUOTE.

We have asked Canadian Embassy here to seek Ottawa's approval for having Blair Seaborn convey above quoted passage to appropriate Hanoi authorities in course of next visit Hanoi. . . .

. . .

RUSK

March 5, 1965

CanDel SAIGON 203 (TopSec Bacon/No Distrib), Immed.,

FOR ARNOLD SMITH and FAR EAST DIV

. . .

2. On afternoon Mar 4 I paid second call on Ha Van Lau in lieu of call on PM. Incidentally Stawicki managed without difficulty to see P.M. for farewell call. I explained nature of msg and then read him slowly French translation of full text of Cabot's statement in Wsaw as given in Wash, D.C. Tel 642 Feb 27.

3. Interpreter took full notes. Ha Van Lau said he would pass msg on to PM though his personal opinion was that it contained nothing new. They had already had report of latest WSAW mtg from Chinese.

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4. Ha Van Lau then made personal comment on msg and general situation. It contained no RPT no new elements and is of so little interest that I am sending close to verbatim account only by Bag.

5. . . .

6. My personal opinion is that in present circumstances DRVN have very little interest in CDM channel of communication with USA. They have never taken initiative to use it and this time were not RPT not even sufficiently interested to arrange for me to see PM.

7. . . .

SEABORN

March 4, 1965

AmEmbassy PARIS 5008 to SecState Wash DC (S/Limdis/Noforn), Priority, Rec'd 4 Mar 65, 2:02 P.M.

Following from Quai IndoChina Chief Brethes:

Chief DRV Commercial Delegation Mai Van Bo came to Quai yesterday for discussion of unspecified disagreement over French Lycee in Hanoi. He took opportunity to remark that while previously DRV had been ready to consider negotiation of some sort, US actions had changed situation. Negotiations no longer matter for consideration at this time, and people of North and South Viet Nam were going to defend themselves. Tone of Bo's comments was very stern and French concluded he had probably received instructions avoid any discussion with French on possible political settlement.

. . . .

BOHLEN

March 7, 1965

AmEmbassy SAIGON 2880 to SecState Wash DC (S/Exdis), Rec'd 7 Mar 65, 2PM.

. . . .

Seaborn also discussed his general impression on which he drafting separate report. Because of his inability to see any senior official or have any substantive discussion with any Vietnamese, and discussions with Eastern Bloc diplomats primary impression is that Hanoi thus far not seriously concerned by strikes, it being Hanoi's interpretation



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of events that strikes are only a limited attempt by us to improve its bargaining position for conference which USG is strenuously seeking in order to extricate itself from war in SVN which USG now recognizes is lost. Thus Hanoi not very concerned by strikes which have not seriously hurt it and as USG is one urgently seeking conference it is to Hanoi's advantage to continue to hold back on agreeing to any conference which at this time could only, as in 1954, result in depriving DRV of that full victory which it sees in sight as turmoil in SVN continues and pressures on US for withdrawal continue to mount.

TAYLOR

March 27, 1965

STATE 2718 to Amembassy SAIGON (TS/EXDIS), Immediate, Sent 27 Mar 65, 3:48 P.M.

We are considering asking Canadians to instruct Seaborn to bear message to Hanoi, when he leaves May 31, for delivery to senior DRV official if and only if his first contacts with his normal liaison contact, in which he would inquire about availability senior officials, meet with forthcoming response and DRV initiative for appointment. . . .

Proposed presentation Seaborn would make to senior official would be as follows:

1. In my last visit, I conveyed a statement of US views concerning South Viet-Nam, which followed the lines of what the USG had stated to Peiping representatives at Warsaw. . . .
2. Since my last visit, the USG has of course further publicly stated its position in President Johnson's speech of April 7 and in the US reply to the note of the 17 non-aligned nations, in which the USG further defined its readiness for unconditional discussions, its objectives, and the sequence of actions that might lead to a peaceful solution of the problem.
3. The USG has been disappointed to note that actions in the South supported and directed by Hanoi appear to continue without change, and even to be currently intensified. . . .
4. In addition, the USG informed Hanoi on May 12 that it was undertaking a temporary suspension of bombing attacks for a period of several days. The USG regrets that this action met with no response from Hanoi neither directly not in the form of any significant reductions of armed actions in South Viet-Nam by forces

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whose actions, in the view of the USG, can be decisively affected from North Viet-Nam. Accordingly, the USG, in coordination with the Republic of Viet-Nam, was obliged to resume bombing attacks. Nonetheless, the USG continues to consider the possibility of working toward a solution by mutual example.

5. In making these points, the USG again must make it clear that in the absence of action or discussions leading to a political solution it must and will take whatever actions may be necessary to meet and to counter the offensive actions being carried out by North Viet-Nam against South Viet-Nam and against American forces acting to assist the Republic of Viet-Nam.

6. If but only if senior DRV representative gets on to Pham Van Dong four points of April 8, Seaborn would reply that he has no message from USG on this subject. However, his study of four points would indicate that some might be acceptable to USG but that others would clearly be unacceptable. It has also not been clear whether DRV statements should be taken to mean that the recognition of these points was required as, in effect, a condition for any discussions. He would say that the USG appears to have made its position clear, that it would accept unconditional discussions in the full sense, with either side free to bring up any matter, and that he would be personally interested in whether the DRV representative wished to clarify the question of whether their recognition is regarded by the DRV as a condition to any discussions. End proposed text.

. . .

RUSK

May 28, 1965

Amembassy SAIGON 3927 to SecState Wash DC (TS/Exdis), Immediate,  
Rec'd 28 May 1965, 4:10 A.M. (Passed White House, DOD, CIA, 5/28/65, 4:55 A.M.)

Ref DEPTTEL 2718

We see no objection to Seaborn seeking in manner set forth first paragraph RefTel to make approach.

With respect to substance, we offer following comments:

Last part third sentence of numbered para one appears to be worded in somewhat more astringent terms than useful or desirable in such private approach, although it is important point be made.

We are concerned by degree to which numbered para four continues to lead us towards commitment to cease bombing simply in return for cessation or even reduction of VC armed actions in SVN. Without laboring point, believe it is important not at this time at least to give away our position on withdrawal of VC. . . .

. . .

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June 6, 1965

Amembassy SAIGON 4083 to SecState (Confid/Limdis), Rec'd Jun 7, 1965,  
2:06 A.M.

Canadian ICC Commissioner Blair Seaborn told EmbOff this morning results of his latest week-long visit to Hanoi, from which he had returned yesterday.

Seaborn said that he is persuaded from his conversations with diplomats and DRV officials that DRV is not now interested in any negotiations. He said that he was able to see new Foreign Minister Trinh but that discussion had revealed nothing new.

Trinh followed standard line that US offer of unconditional discussion was "deceitful" since US continued build-up in South Vietnam and bombing of North. Seaborn pressed Trinh to elaborate on "Four Points," asking whether points intended to be seen as preconditions to talks or as result of talks or as ultimate goals. Trinh remained deliberately vague and gave no clear answers. . . .

. . . .

TAYLOR

MAYFLOWER

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## XII. PROJECT MAYFLOWER -- THE FIRST BOMBING PAUSE

### A. The Background

Pressure for some form of bombing halt had mounted steadily throughout April and early May. As early as April 2, Canada's Prime Minister Lester Pearson, on his way to meet with President Johnson, had stopped off to make a speech in Philadelphia in which he suggested that the President should order a "pause" in the bombing of North Vietnam.

Pearson's gratuitous advice was particularly galling to the President because the pause had become the battle slogan of the anti-Vietnam movement. Students had picketed the LBJ Ranch in Texas, demanding a cessation of bombing. A massive teach-in had been scheduled for May 15 in Washington, with academicians who wanted withdrawal of American influence from the Asian mainland, ready to demand as a first step an immediate end of the bombing. Pressure for a pause was building up, too, in Congress among liberal Democrats. 116/ The U.N. Secretary General was on a continual bombing pause kick, with a proposal for a three month suspension of bombing in return for Hanoi's agreement to cease infiltration in South Vietnam. U Thant had told Ambassador Stevenson on April 24 that he believed such a gesture would facilitate renewed non-aligned pressure upon Hanoi to negotiate.

Evidently, however, the President was not impressed with the widespread clamor that such a gesture would evoke any response from Hanoi. He had responded favorably to the 17-Nation appeal in his April 7th speech, only to be answered with blunt rejection by Hanoi and Peking. The U.S. had responded favorably to the idea of a Cambodian Conference that would provide opportunities for "corridor contacts" with Communist powers on the Vietnam problem, but Peking had apparently blocked that initiative. Encouragement had been given to a UK approach to the Soviets in February looking toward consultations under Article 19 of the 1962 Geneva Accords, but no response from the USSR had been received. The Radhakrishnan proposal for a cease-fire along the 17th parallel, supervised by an "Afro-Asian Force" was being favorably considered by the U.S. only to be denounced as a "plot" by Peking and as an "offense" by Hanoi. Publicly, the President was plaintive:

There are those who frequently talk of negotiations and political settlement and that they believe this is the course we should pursue, and so do I. When they talk that way I say, welcome to the club. I want to negotiate. I would much rather talk than fight, and I think everyone would. Bring in who you want us to negotiate with. I have searched high and wide, and I am a reasonably good cowboy, and I can't even rope anybody and bring them in who is willing to talk and

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settle this by negotiation. We send them messages through allies - one country, two countries, three countries, four or five countries - all have tried to be helpful. The distinguished British citizen, Mr. (Patrick Gordon) Walker, has been out there, and they say, we can't even talk to you. All our intelligence is unanimous in this one point, that they see no need for negotiation. They think they are winning and they have won and why should they sit down and give us something and settle with us. 117/

But while the public clamor persisted and became more and more difficult to ignore, the President was receiving intelligence assessments from Saigon and from Washington that tended to confirm his reading of Hanoi's disinterest in negotiations, but that provided him with a quite different argument for a bombing pause at this time: if the conflict was going to have to be expanded and bombing intensified before Hanoi would "come to reason," it would be easier and politically more palatable to do so after a pause, which would afford an opportunity for the enemy's intentions to be more clearly revealed.

On May 4, in response to an urgent request from Washington, Ambassador Taylor submitted a U.S. Mission "Assessment of DRV/VC Probable Courses of Action During the Next Three Months." The assessment confirmed the Washington view that Hanoi continued to have a very favorable view of its prospects for victory:

...Tone of statements emanating from Hanoi since February and March indicate that the DRV has not weakened in its determination to continue directing and supporting Viet Cong and seeking further intensification of war in the South:

From DRV viewpoint, outlook is probably still favorable despite air strikes on North. Although their general transportation system in North has been significantly damaged, thus somewhat reducing their infiltration capability, Hanoi may calculate it can accept level of damage being inflicted as reasonable price to pay for chance of victory in South. Viet Cong forces in south retain capability of taking local initiatives on ground, although they must accept cost of heavier losses from tactical air support, and their morale possibly has been reduced by recent developments. GVN force levels still are not adequate to cope with these Viet Cong capabilities. Despite relative longevity of Quat Govt., which marks improvement over previous recent Govts., political situation is still basically unstable. While military and civilian morale has risen, rumblings among generals continue, suspicion among political and religious groups persist and are subject to exploitation by communists. On balance, Hanoi probably believes it has considerable basis

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for expectation that Viet Cong, who were clearly making progress as recently as February, can regain the initiative and, by the application of offensive power, can create an atmosphere in which negotiations favorable to the DRV can be instituted.

Given this situation, the report argued, the most probable course of action that Hanoi would pursue is to continue its efforts to expand its military action in the South, "including covert introduction of additional PAVN units on order of several regiments. This course offers ...the prospect of achieving major military gains capable of offsetting US/GVN application of air power. Such gains would expand Viet Cong areas of control and might lead to political demoralization in South Vietnam."  
118/

A similarly unencouraging assessment had been submitted to the President by the Board of National Estimates on April 22. In a "highly sensitive, limited distribution" memorandum, the leading personalities of the U.S. intelligence community concurred in the prediction that:

If present US policies continue without the introduction of large additional forces or increased US air effort, the Communists are likely to hold to their existing policy of seeking victory in the local military struggle in South Vietnam. They will try to intensify that struggle, supporting it with additional men and equipment. At the same time, DRV air defenses will be strengthened through Soviet and perhaps Chinese aid.

If, however, the U.S. deepens its involvement by increasing its combat role and intensifying its air effort, the intelligence officers believed:

...that the Viet Cong, North Vietnam, and China would initially...try to offset the new enemy strength by stepping up the insurgency, reinforcing the Viet Cong with the men and equipment necessary. They would likely count on time being on their side and try to force the piecemeal engagement of US troops under conditions which might bog them down in jungle warfare, hoping to present the US with a de facto partition of the country. The Soviet Union... would almost certainly acquiesce in a decision by Hanoi to intensify the struggle. 119/

This lack of any real prospect of "give" on the enemy's part was also confirmed by Admiral Raborn, shortly after he had succeeded John McCone as Director of Central Intelligence. On the day of Raborn's swearing-in (April 28), the President had given him a letter from McCone (apparently worded along the lines of his memorandum described in Section IX.E. of this study) which McCone had handed to the President as his last official act. The President had asked Raborn to prepare

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his own comments on McCone's views. Raborn's comments, circulated to Secretaries Rusk and McNamara on May 6, included the following:

Our limited bombing of the North and our present ground-force build-up in the South are not likely to exert sufficient pressure on the enemy to cause him to meet our present terms in the foreseeable future. I note very recent evidence which suggests that our military pressures are becoming somewhat more damaging to the enemy within South Vietnam, but I am inclined to doubt that this damage is increasing at a rate which will bring him quickly to the conference table.

With particular reference to McCone's recommendation that the US add much heavier air action against the North to its planned combat force deployment to the South, Raborn indicated his agreement, and expressed his belief that such an action would have the following consequences:

The DRV is, in my view, unlikely to engage in meaningful discussions at any time in coming months until US air attacks have begun to damage or destroy its principal economic and military targets. I thus concur with the USIB's judgment of 18 February 1965, that, given such US punishment, the enemy would be "somewhat more likely" to decide to make some effort to secure a respite, rather than to intensify the struggle further and accept the consequent risks.

And then he added the following advice:

Insofar as possible, we should try to manage any program of expanded bombings in ways which (1) would leave the DRV an opportunity to explore negotiations without complete loss of face, (2) would not preclude any Soviet pressures on Hanoi to keep the war from expanding, and (3) would not suddenly produce extreme world pressures against us. In this connection, the timing and circumstances in which the bombings were extended northward could be of critical importance, particularly in light of the fact that there have been some indications of differing views between Moscow, Peiping, and Hanoi. For example, it would probably be advantageous to expand bombings after, not before, some major new VC move (e.g., obvious concentration for imminent attack on Da Nang or Kontum) and after, not before, any current possibilities of serious negotiations have been fully tested. And such bombings should not be so regular as to leave no interval for the Communists to make concessions with some grace. Indeed, we should keep in mind the possibility of a pause at some appropriate time, which could serve to test the Communist intentions and to exploit any differences on their side. (Emphasis supplied)



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One other consideration may have entered into the President's bombing pause calculus at this time. On April 5, a TROJAN HORSE photography mission had revealed the first SA-2 SAM site under construction fifteen miles SSE of Hanoi, confirming the long-rumored shipment of Soviet surface-to-air missiles to North Vietnam. 120/ Moreover, the SAMs were only the most dramatic form of considerably increased quantities of modern military equipment beginning to be furnished to the DRV by the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was now in the process of becoming visibly committed to assisting North Vietnam in resisting U.S. attacks on its territory, and a more direct confrontation of US and USSR military force was rapidly approaching. Indeed, the Joint Chiefs had indicated, on April 14, their desire to obtain approval for air strikes against the sites on short notice as they become operational, had estimated, on May 6, that the first site construction could be completed by May 15, and had instructed CINCPAC to commence planning to conduct air strikes against that site. 121/ A decision involving a major Soviet "flashpoint", therefore, would soon have to be faced, and the President may well have wished to provide a prior opportunity for a quiet Hanoi backdown, before proceeding with more forceful military activity.

B. Setting the Stage

On the evening of May 10 the President sent a personal **FLASH** message to Ambassador Taylor, 122/ informing him that he (the President) had decided to call a brief halt to air attacks in the North and instructing him to obtain Premier Quat's agreement to the plan. The text of the message follows:

I have learned from Bob McNamara that nearly all ROLLING THUNDER operations for this week can be completed by Wednesday noon, Washington time. This fact and the days of Buddha's birthday seem to me to provide an excellent opportunity for a pause in air attacks which might go into next week and which I could use to good effect with world opinion.

My plan is not to announce this brief pause but simply to call it privately to the attention of Moscow and Hanoi as soon as possible and tell them that we shall be watching closely to see whether they respond in any way. My current plan is to report publicly after the pause ends on what we have done.

Could you see Quat right away on Tuesday and see if you can persuade him to concur in this plan. I would like to associate him with me in this decision if possible, but I would accept a simple concurrence or even willingness not to oppose my decision. In general, I think it important that he and I should act together in such matters, but I have no desire to embarrass him if it is politically difficult for him to join actively in a pause over Buddha's birthday.

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We have noted your [recent cables] but do not yet have your appreciation of the political effect in Saigon of acting around Buddha's birthday. From my point of view it is a great advantage to use Buddha's birthday to mask the first days of the pause here, if it is at all possible in political terms for Quat. I assume we could undertake to enlist the Archbishop and the Nuncio in calming the Catholics.

You should understand that my purpose in this plan is to begin to clear a path either toward restoration of peace or toward increased military action, depending upon the reaction of the Communists. We have amply demonstrated our determination and our commitment in the last two months, and I now wish to gain some flexibility.

I know that this is a hard assignment on short notice, but there is no one who can bring it off better.

I have kept this plan in the tightest possible circle here and wish you to inform no one but Alexis Johnson. After I have your report of Quat's reaction I will make a final decision and it will be communicated promptly to senior officers concerned.

Ambassador Taylor promptly relayed the President's plan to Quat, whose major objection was to the notion of linking the pause in any way with Buddha's birthday. Taylor reported this objection to Washington 123/ and received the following additional instructions from the Department in return. 124/

We have decided here to go ahead commencing on Thursday [May 13] for period of approximately 5 - 7 days. Orders through military channels will place stand-down on basis "in order to observe reaction of DRV rail and road transportation systems" and will order increase in photo recce of DRV and bombing within SVN. You should tell Westmoreland true basis for his personal use only so that you and he and Alex Johnson remain the only three Americans in Saigon aboard. We have informed Dobrynin tonight and are instructing Kohler to convey message to Hanoi through DRV Ambassador in Moscow. I will also be telling British and Canadian Foreign Ministers personally tomorrow and we will convey message to Menzies through Embassy here. However, each of these being informed only at highest levels and their Saigon representatives will not repeat not be witting.

You should take following actions:

1. Inform Quat we are going ahead. You should not specify period but let us know if he raises question or still insists on as short a period as 4 - 5 days. Tell him we will definitely

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refrain at all times from associating action with Buddha's birthday and that our initial plan will be to refer all press queries to Washington and to hold as long as possible simply to operational factors as explanation. You should raise with him question of what he will tell generals urging in strongest terms that he tell them only what we are saying through military channel and preferably delay even this until question arises. If Quat raises question of what we are saying to Communist side, you will have copies tonight's talk with Dobrynin and instructions to Kohler by septels and may draw generally on these for his personal use only.

2. To deal with any possibility adverse Catholic reaction you should inform Archbishop and/or Nuncio very privately that any variation in actions in forthcoming period will be USG decisions not related in any way to Buddha's birthday or any appeal or issue connected with it. You may of course also reiterate that any such variations have no effect whatever on our determination as clearly shown in recent months. We leave timing this approach to you but believe it should be done earliest before any speculation arises.

3. At appropriate time you should instruct Zorthian to report simply that no operations other than reconnaissance were conducted on each day and to refer press queries, preferably by indirection, to Washington.

A few hours later, Secretary McNamara, with the concurrence of Secretary Rusk and McGeorge Bundy, sent the following FLASH joint State/Defense message through military channels to Ambassador Taylor, CINCPAC and COMUSMACV: 125/

In order to observe reaction of DRV rail and road transportation systems, bombing (including armed recce and other strike operations) of targets within DRV will cease for several days effective 2400 12 May Saigon time. CINCPAC should issue the necessary instructions to US forces and Ambassador should seek to obtain compliance of VNAF.

During the period in which bombing operations are suspended, photo and eyeball reconnaissance flights over DRV, in so far as they can be carried out without flak suppression escorts and within currently approved rules relating to altitudes and latitudes, will be increased to the level required to permit a thorough study of lines of communication. The bombing sorties which would have been directed against the DRV during this period, to the extent practical, will be targeted against appropriate targets in South Vietnam.

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ROLLING THUNDER 15 as outlined in JCS 1736 has been approved. It is to be executed upon receipt of appropriate execution orders.

Press guidance for the period during which bombing operations are suspended will be furnished in a separate message.

Acting on these instructions, Taylor saw Quat in Saigon on the morning of May 12, and reported back as follows: 126/

Along with Alex Johnson, I called this morning to convey to Quat the information contained in Department's instructions. I told him that his views with regard to linking the pause with Buddha's birthday had been accepted and that this element had been removed from the plan. I explained that the pause begins tomorrow (Saigon time) and will continue for several days. As he did not raise any question with regard to the precise duration, I did not elaborate. He liked the military justification for the pause as explained in REFTEL and undertook to remain within this language in dealing with his generals. I assured him that General Westmoreland would do the same in his military contacts.

We explained to Quat how the message was being conveyed to the USSR and Hanoi. He had no comment except to express doubt that any detectable change in DRV conduct will take place during the suspension of attacks.

As for comment to the press, he repeated his intention to ward off queries by references to "Operational Requirements."

While securing Quat's support has been somewhat easier than I had anticipated, I am sure that he and his colleagues will become uneasy very quickly if this pause runs beyond the "four to five days" which Quat has indicated to be acceptable from his point of view. I would hope that our purposes can have been fulfilled within the five day period.

With regard to paragraph 2 [of Department's instructions], Johnson and I feel that it is unnecessary and probably undesirable to approach Archbishop Binh or the Nuncio at this time. We will watch closely the local reaction to the suspension and convey the message to the Catholic leadership, if necessary, at a timely moment.

Much additional attention was lavished by Washington upon maintaining near-absolute secrecy, preserving a plausible front vis-a-vis the press, and other aspects of stage management. On May 12, the operation was given the codeword MAYFLOWER, and all communications on it were thenceforth to be slugged with that indicator. Besides Taylor and Johnson, the only American Ambassadors informed of the political purpose

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of MAYFLOWER were William Sullivan in Vientiane, Foy Kohler in Moscow, and Winthrop Brown in Seoul -- the latter only for the purpose of informing President Park Chung Hee who was about to embark on a state visit to Washington and who, the Department felt, should be forewarned so that he might more effectively fend off press probings.

On the evening of May 11, Secretary Rusk made two moves designed to inform "the other side" of the fact that a bombing halt was being called and of its political purpose:

1. He sent a cable 127/ to Foy Kohler in Moscow, instructing him to make urgent contact with the DRV Ambassador in Moscow to convey a carefully prepared message to him, as quoted below. The cable set forth the instructions and rationale as follows:

...We are using you as channel to avoid using Soviets as intermediaries and also to insure that message is accurately and directly delivered. We leave appropriate method of arranging contact to you and are not concerned if Soviets should become aware you are making such contact. You should of course make maximum effort avoid any attention by any third party.

Message you should deliver should be oral but confirmed by written piece of paper which you should hand to Ambassador with request he deliver message to Hanoi. Message is as follows:

BEGIN TEXT. The highest authority in this Government has asked me to inform Hanoi that there will be no air attacks on North Viet-Nam for a period beginning at noon, Washington time, Wednesday, May 12, and running into next week.

In this decision the United States Government has taken account of repeated suggestions from various quarters, including public statements by Hanoi representatives, that there can be no progress toward peace while there are air attacks on North Viet-Nam. The United States Government remains convinced that the underlying cause of trouble in Southeast Asia is armed action against the people and Government of South Vietnam by forces whose actions can be decisively affected from North Vietnam. The United States will be very watchful to see whether in this period of pause there are significant reductions in such armed actions by such forces. (The United States must emphasize that the road toward the end of armed attacks against the people and Government of Vietnam is the only road which will permit the Government of Vietnam (and the Government of the United States) to bring a permanent end to their attacks on North Vietnam.)...

In taking this action the United States is well aware of the risk that a temporary suspension of these air attacks may

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be misunderstood as an indication of weakness, and it is therefore necessary for me to point out that if this pause should be misunderstood in this fashion, by any party, it would be necessary to demonstrate more clearly than ever, after the pause ended, that the United States is determined not to accept aggression without reply in Vietnam. Moreover, the United States must point out that the decision to end air attacks for this limited trial period is one which it must be free to reverse if at any time in the coming days there should be actions by the other side in Vietnam which required immediate reply.

But my Government is very hopeful that there will be no such misunderstanding and that this first pause in the air attacks may meet with a response which will permit further and more extended suspension of this form of military action in the expectation of equally constructive actions by the other side in the future. END TEXT.

2. He summoned Soviet Ambassador Anatol Dobrynin to his office in the State Department and made virtually the same oral statement to him, confirmed by a parallel written version handed to him. Rusk, that same evening described the meeting to Foy Kohler in a second cable, 128/ sent immediately after the message quoted above:

I explained we were not indicating any precise number of days, that we retained freedom of action, and that we would convey similar message to Hanoi. I also said we would make no announcement although we expected press pressures, and made clear our action related only to strikes of any sort and not to continued reconnaissance. (Paper itself makes clear action confined to DRV and does not include Laos or SVN.)

I also said we did not know what to expect but that Hanoi knows what it is doing and can find a way to make its response clear.

Dobrynin noted we were merely informing Soviets and was clearly relieved we not asking them to act as intermediary. Asked about my trip to Vienna and indicated there might be further conversations there Saturday with Gromyko. Asked basically whether action represented any change in fundamental US position.

I replied that it did not and that this should be no surprise.

I reviewed recent indications that Cambodia conference blocked by Peiping despite favorable mention in DRV-Moscow communique and that three-party talks on Laos likewise in

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abeyance apparently following Peiping and perhaps Hanoi pressure. President on April 7 had tried open up discourse but thus far channels blocked. If attacks on DRV were part of problem, Communist response to present action might open up channels.

Dobrynin said he thought we would get some answer but could not predict what.

I underscored importance action not be misunderstood in Hanoi. Hanoi appears to have impression they may succeed, but US will not get tired or be affected by very small domestic opposition or by international pressures, Hanoi cannot rely on Saigon instability. They may have wrong ideas on these points and important they not misunderstand our action.

Dobrynin responded he saw no danger of misunderstanding but problem was to find way.

Parallel with the Secretary's diplomatic moves, the President made a major public address on the first day of the bombing pause, in which he made no reference to the pause, but in which he urged Hanoi to consider a "political solution." The speech, embracing the theme of the "three faces of war" (1. armed conflict, 2. diplomacy and politics, and 3. human need) contained the following passage:

The second face of war in Viet-Nam is the quest for a political solution - the face of diplomacy and politics - of the ambitions and the interests of other nations. We know, as our adversaries should also know, that there is no purely military solution in sight for either side. We are ready for unconditional discussions. Most of the non-Communist nations of the world favor such unconditional discussions. And it would clearly be in the interest of North Vietnam to now come to the conference table. For them the continuation of war, without talks, means only damage without conquest. Communist China apparently desires the war to continue whatever the cost to their allies. Their target is not merely South Viet-Nam; it is Asia. Their objective is not the fulfillment of Vietnamese nationalism; it is to erode and to discredit America's ability to help prevent Chinese domination over all of Asia.

In this domination they will never succeed. 129/

C. Transmitting the Messages

Foy Kohler in Moscow, upon receiving the Secretary's instructions, directed his Deputy Chief of Mission to telephone the North Vietnamese Embassy on the morning of May 12 to request an urgent appointment for Ambassador Kohler with the North Vietnamese Ambassador. The latter, however,

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declined to receive the American Ambassador "in view of the absence of diplomatic relations between our two countries," and suggested instead that the "important, high level private message" from the US Government which Ambassador Kohler wished to communicate to the NVN Ambassador be sent to the Soviet Government "in its capacity as Co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference."

Kohler felt it would not be productive to press the NVN embassy further, and cabled the Department for instructions as to which of two alternatives he should pursue: "(1) Transmit message by letter via messenger to NVN ambassador; or (2) seek appointment with Acting Foreign Minister Kuznetsov to convey message." 130/

The Department's reply was as follows:

Believe you should pursue both alternatives urgently, explaining to Kuznetsov (who will by now have heard from Dobrynin) that you recognize reluctance of Soviets to act as intermediary and are asking solely that Soviets transmit message to DRV Ambassador in accordance with DRV suggestion. 131/

Kohler acted promptly on both alternatives. He transmitted the "oral" communication to the DRV Ambassador under cover of a letter signed by Kohler, which read as follows:

In accordance with the suggestion made by a member of your staff today, I am attempting to reach the Acting Foreign Minister tonight.

Since this may not be possible and because of its importance, I enclose the message I had hoped to be able to convey to you personally earlier today.

However, though hand-delivered by an American embassy employee to a DRV employee, the communication was returned the following morning in a plain envelope addressed simply Embassy of US of A. 132/

At the same time, Kohler sought an urgent appointment with Acting Foreign Minister Kuznetsov (Gromyko being out of town) but Kuznetsov was not available and Kohler was able to see only Deputy Foreign Minister Firyubin. The latter, after some temporizing, flatly refused his government's services as an intermediary and lectured Kohler at length upon the US misconception of the real nature of the conflict in Vietnam. Kohler's account of the conversation follows: 133/

I informed Firyubin that as he must know from report of Dobrynin's conversation with Secretary, US Government has made decision which we hoped would be both understood and not misunderstood. I had been informed by several high



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Soviet sources that decision we had taken was precisely what was called for but none had been in position to predict reaction. Our purpose in reaching this significant decision was to attempt to ascertain if a way could be found to peaceful solution of current crisis in Southeast Asia. We had hoped we would be able to deliver oral communication conveying this decision to DRV authorities and I had attempted to do so today through DRV Ambassador. Unfortunately Ambassador let it be known that he did not wish to receive me personally and when his embassy was informed that the message I sought to deliver was of extreme importance, it was suggested that we transmit the message through the Soviet Government in its capacity as Geneva Co-Chairman. It was because of these circumstances that I had found it necessary to disturb Mr. Firyubin tonight. I pointed out that although DRV Ambassador had refused to receive me, embassy had succeeded in delivering a copy of oral communication to employee of DRV embassy earlier this evening (2015 Local) who agreed to bring it to attention of Ambassador (communication as set forth in DEPTTEL 3103 then translated in full for Firyubin with sole interruption being Firyubin's inquiry if cessation attacks applied only to those from air - which I confirmed.) After receiving confirmation from me that communication was of oral nature, Firyubin said he viewed communication as based on old erroneous conception on which US has proceeded, a conception which precludes US recognizing that the South Vietnamese people are fighting for their freedom and are struggling against aggression and control by Saigon puppets. Furthermore it indicated to Firyubin that we continued to view the picture incorrectly when we referred again to the struggle in South Vietnam as being organized and directed by the DRV. The absurdity of this view, he said, is obvious and naturally the Soviet Government cannot agree with it as it has made clear in numerous statements. Firyubin could only view the communication as repetition of the threat against the DRV -- now a threat of renewed and expanded aggression. This was the only way he could interpret the reference to the risk that a suspension of attacks involved. Obviously we are suffering from a gross misunderstanding if we think that such aggression will go unpunished, without response. The only constructive approach to a peaceful settlement of the situation in South Vietnam was to end the aggression, recall troops from South Vietnam and give the Vietnamese people the right to choose their own form of Government -- a choice which can be made freely only if the so-called specialists should be withdrawn and their opportunity of exercising influence on the Vietnamese thus removed. Firyubin said that he well acquainted with the countries and peoples of Southeast Asia; he therefore was aware and could understand the feelings caused by our actions there as well as the reaction in many other parts of the world.

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I told Firyubin I had asked to see him to put a very simple question to him. Does the Soviet Government agree to transmit the oral communication to the DRV? I said this was the whole purpose of my visit.

Firyubin said the DRV embassy had not put such a request to the Soviet Government. I must agree that for Soviets to act as intermediary between us and DRV is very unusual. Naturally he would report my request to his Government and if the DRV should request this service he would not exclude the possibility of transmitting the communication to the DRV Government. Meanwhile he would be interested in knowing just how the DRV embassy had responded to our approach.

I again described for Firyubin our efforts to deliver the message to the DRV through its embassy in Moscow and told him that the end result was a suggestion by the embassy that we transmit the message through the Soviet Government in its capacity as Geneva Co-Chairman. Firyubin repeated his promise to report my request to his Government and to inform me of the results.

While the conversation continued in this vein, Firyubin had passed a note to a Foreign Office assistant, Kornienko, who attended him, and the latter left the room. After some time, Kornienko reappeared and handed a note to Firyubin, which the latter read carefully. After reading the note, Firyubin said flatly that the Soviet Government would not transmit the U.S. Government's message to the DRV, that the DRV embassy had not requested this service and that it was the U.S. responsibility to find a convenient way of passing the message. Kohler's account continues:

I said I wished to understand him correctly. Was he rejecting my request to transmit the communication to the DRV?

He said this was a correct understanding of the Soviet Government position. We must ourselves find the way.

I said that what I was seeking was the cooperation of the Soviet Government and Firyubin's remarks indicated clearly that the Soviet Government was refusing this. Firyubin said, "I am not a postman" and again said we could find our own ways of transmitting messages.

I pointed out to Firyubin that the cooperation I had requested is a well-known and not unprecedented process in international diplomacy. I had great difficulty in reconciling Soviet Government refusal to cooperate with its declaration in support of peaceful settlement of disputed questions.

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Kornienko chimed in that he had recalled statement by both the President and Secretary of State on several occasions that the U.S. Government has channels for transmitting messages direct to Hanoi. On this the conversation ended but it should be noted that Firyubin made no effort to return to me the text of the oral communication which I had handed him at the outset of the conversation.

After further reflection on his meeting with Firyubin, Kohler sent a follow-on message to Washington that afternoon, 13<sup>4</sup>/ in which he sought to present the Soviet position with some sympathy and to promote an understanding of the Soviet rebuff in the light of the "rather strenuous nature" of the document we were asking them to transmit. Kohler's comments were as follows:

I came away from my meeting with Firyubin last night with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I was annoyed at the apparent Soviet rebuff of an effort to take heat out of admittedly dangerous situation in SEA and impatient with flimsy rationale for Soviet refusal offered by Firyubin. On the other hand, I could understand, if not sympathize with, Soviet sensitivity, given Chicom eagerness to adduce proof of their charges of collusion against Soviets and, frankly, given rather strenuous nature of document they were being asked to transmit to DRV.

Implicit in latter view, of course, is assumption that Soviets in fact want bombing to stop, are genuinely concerned at possibilities escalation, and are interested in working out some sort of modus vivendi which would take heat out of situation while not undercutting their own position in Commie world as loyal socialist ally. We cannot be sure that this is way Soviets view situation, and it entirely possible they so confident our ultimate defeat in Vietnam that no gesture on our part would meet with encouraging response. Believe at this point, however, we lose nothing assuming Soviets have not completely forgotten lesson Cuba and there is some flexibility in Soviet position which we should seek to exploit.

I would hope, therefore, we would not regard Firyubin's reaction last night as evidence conscious hardening of Soviet attitude. It may simply be reflection of bind Soviets find themselves in at moment. Meanwhile, we can feel sure message is already in DRV hands -- copies now available thru Dobrynin, Firyubin, and DRV embassy here -- and I would suggest we go through with original plan and be on alert, both here and on the scene for any sigis reaction from other side. Seen from here, we would lose nothing by doing so; and we gain at least with our friends and the unaligned.

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By this time (1:00 p.m. March 13, Moscow time), though Kohler was not aware of it, the bombing pause had already been in effect for seventeen hours. It had gone into effect as planned at 2400 on March 12, Saigon time, and the Department so informed Kohler. The Department also decided, in spite of Kohler's confidence that the U.S. "oral" communication had reached Hanoi, to make doubly sure by asking the U.K. Government to instruct its Consul in Hanoi to transmit the same message, in writing, to his normal contact in the DRV. Informed by the Department that this step was about to be taken, Kohler expressed his dissatisfaction with the character and tone of the communication by recommending that, in any resubmission, the message be shortened and softened:

...I would recommend we shorten and revise wording of "oral" communication to DRV if we plan resubmit through British Consul Hanoi. If cast in present form, I think we are simply inviting rebuff, and exercise-Hanoi would prove as fruitless as our efforts in Moscow. Something along lines following would get essential message across:

BEGIN TEXT. The highest authority in this Government has asked me to inform Hanoi that there will be no air attacks on North Vietnam for a period beginning at noon, Washington time, Wednesday, May 12 and running into next week.

In this decision the United States Government has taken account of repeated suggestions from various quarters, including public statements by Hanoi representatives, that there can be no progress toward peace while there are air attacks on North Vietnam.

The United States Government expects that in consequence of this action the DRV will show similar restraint. If this should not prove to be the case, then the United States Government will feel compelled to take such measures as it feels are necessary to deal with the situation in Vietnam.  
END TEXT. 135/

Kohler's recommendation was not accepted, and the message was transmitted to the DRV by the British Consul in Hanoi in its original form. As in the Moscow case, the message was shortly thereafter returned to the sender, ostensibly unopened.

As a footnote to the "unopened letter" episodes, it may be worth noting that Canadian ICC Commissioner Blair Seaborn, on an early-June visit to Hanoi, was approached by the Czech Ambassador to the DRV, who recounted to him the story of Kohler's unsuccessful effort to deliver the message to the DRV Ambassador in Moscow, with the message having been returned ostensibly unopened. The Czech Ambassador said "everybody" in Hanoi knew the story. 136/

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D. Awaiting a Response

While the Administration expected little in the way of a positive Hanoi response, a watchful eye was kept for any signals or actions that might suggest North Vietnamese or Soviet receptivity to any further diplomatic explorations. Such signals as were received, however, were entirely negative. On May 15 a Hanoi English language broadcast noted Western news reports of the bombing cessation, terming them "a worn out trick of deceit and threat..." On the same day, in a conversation with British Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart in Vienna, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko indicated the USSR's disinclination to participate in any negotiations on Indochina.

In the meantime, in Saigon, the U.S. Mission was hard at work trying to clarify its own thinking -- and that of Washington -- on the persuasive, or rather coercive, possibilities of bombing pauses. In particular, the Mission was hoping to link the intensity of US bombing after the resumption closely to the level of VC activity during the pause. The purpose would be to make it clear to Hanoi that what we were trying to accomplish with our bombing was to get the DRV to cease directing and supporting the VC and to get VC units to cease their military activities in the South. In this approach, a downward trend in VC activities would be "rewarded" in a similar manner by decreasing US bombing. Thus it was hoped that, during the bombing pause, the DRV would offer the first step in a series of events which might ultimately "lead to the termination of hostilities on satisfactory [i.e., U.S.] terms, without engaging in formal negotiations."

Ambassador Taylor described this approach to Washington in a lengthy cable 137/ concurred in by Deputy Ambassador Johnson and General Westmoreland. The Ambassador recognized that there were one or two minor pitfalls in the scheme, but seemed undaunted in his confidence that US bombing could be designed to have powerful coercive effects. Taylor admitted that:

Any success in carrying out such a scenario [would] obviously depend on a considerable amount of cooperation from the DRV side based on a conviction arising from self-interest that the DRV must accept a settlement which excludes the conquest of SVN by NVN. There is little likelihood that the Hanoi leaders are yet ready to reach such a conclusion, but a rigorous application of air attacks at a tempo related to Hanoi/VC activities accompanied by pressure on the ground to compel the VC to engage in incidents or retreat appears to us to have possibilities. Conceivably, these ground operations might eventually result in herding VC units into "safe havens"...Whatever its other weaknesses, such a program would eliminate in large measure the danger which we may now be facing of equating our bombing activity to VC initiated incidents, and of seeming to suggest that we will stop bombing for good if the VC will simply lie low.

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A quite different approach to a settlement was proposed in a rather puzzling informal contact between Pierre Salinger and two somewhat shadowy Soviet officials in Moscow. On the evening of May 11 (i.e., one full day prior to the inauguration of the bombing pause) Salinger, who was in Moscow at the time on private movie production business, was invited to dinner by Mikhail Sagatelyan, whom Salinger had known in Washington during the Kennedy years as the TASS Bureau Chief, and who was at this time assigned to TASS headquarters in Moscow. Salinger reported his conversation to Ambassador Kohler who related it to Secretary Rusk in a cable 138/ as follows:

Sagatelyan probed Salinger hard as to whether he was on some kind of covert mission and seemed unconvinced despite latter's reiterated denials. In any case, Sagatelyan, protesting he was speaking personally, talked at length about Viet-Nam. He wanted Salinger's opinion on hypothetical formula for solution approximately on following lines:

1. US would announce publicly temporary suspension of bombing DRV;
2. DRV or USSR or both would make statement hailing suspension as step toward reasonable solution;
3. Soviet Union would intercede with Viet Cong to curtail military activities;
4. De facto cease fire would thus be accomplished.
5. Conference would be called on related subject (not specifically Viet-Nam). Viet Cong would not be participant but have some kind of observer or corridor status (this followed Salinger's expression of opinion US Government would never accept Viet Cong as participant in any conference).
6. New agreement would be worked out on Viet-Nam providing for broader-based SVN Government not including direct Viet Cong participation but including elements friendly to Viet Cong.

In a follow-up dinner conversation between Salinger and Sagatelyan two nights later, in which a Foreign Office representative, identified only as "Vassily Sergeevich" also participated, the Soviet interlocutors generally confirmed the proposal quoted above; modifying points three and four by suggesting that an actual cease fire could take place only after initiation of negotiations and that a cease fire would in fact be the first item on the agenda of any negotiations. 139/ Additional items of interest were reported by Kohler as follows:

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Soviet interlocutors talked at length about President Kennedy's forbearance post-Cuba period and broadly implied that Soviets now interested in reciprocating such forbearance. It was clear from their remarks that Soviets assume we would welcome some avenue of withdrawal so long as this would not involve loss of American prestige.

Soviets informed Salinger that Soviet Government had received a "Rusk proposal" with regard Vietnam but would not answer proposal or act on it in any way until Soviet Government had some idea as to how current exercise with Salinger would turn out...

As to mechanics of carrying on exercise, Sagatelyan suggested Salinger might convey proposal to US Government through embassy Paris and he himself would fly immediately Paris in order receive from Salinger there any official reaction. Alternatively, if Salinger wished to proceed direct Washington, contact could be designated there, probably either Zinchuk (Soviet embassy counselor) or Vadvichenko (TASS Washington Bureau).

Throughout conversation Soviets made clear to Salinger that because of sensitive Soviet position any progress toward political settlement Vietnam problem must be initiated and carried through, at least in preliminary stages, on basis unofficial contacts, clear implication being if leak should occur or if scheme should go awry, Soviet Government would be in position disavow whole affair. At same time, it was clear from remarks as well as presence of Foreign Office representative that proposal by Sagatelyan had official backing.

Salinger had one further contact with Sagatelyan and Vassily the following day, where it became apparent that the Soviet officials' interest in the proposal had waned. By the time Salinger had returned to Washington and saw Ambassador Thompson at the State Department on May 18, the Soviet disinterest in any role for themselves during the current bombing pause had been made clear through other channels, and Salinger's contacts were not further pursued.

Of these other channels, the most important (and also the most casual) was a brief Kaffeeklatsch between Secretary Rusk and Foreign Minister Gromyko at the Austrian Chancellor's residence in Vienna on May 15. The proceedings are described in a Rusk cable 140 to Undersecretary Ball as follows:

Have just returned from Chancellor's lunch for visiting dignitaries. After lunch Gromyko and I and our wives were at a small table for coffee. I commented to Gromyko that we

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were in something of a dilemma about Southeast Asia. We felt there might be some value in a serious exchange of views between our two Governments but that we did not know whether they themselves wished to discuss it.

He commented with considerable seriousness that the Soviets will not negotiate about Viet-Nam. He said there were other parties involved in that situation and that the United States would have to find ways of establishing contact with them, and he specifically mentioned the DRV. He said they will continue to support North Viet-Nam and will do so "decisively." He then made reference to a fellow socialist country under attack.

I interrupted to point out that the problem was not that a socialist country was subject to attack but that a socialist country was attacking someone else. I said that American military forces are in South Vietnam solely because North Vietnam has been sending large numbers of men and arms into the South.

He denied these facts in the usual ritual fashion but added that in any event it was not up to the United States to be the judge between Vietnamese. I reminded him that he must know by now that a North Korean attack against South Koreans would not be accepted merely because both were Korean. He merely commented that there were important differences between those two situations.

He referred to Dobrynin's talk with me and said that the temporary suspension of bombing was "insulting." I said I could not understand this in view of the fact that Hanoi, Peiping and Moscow have all talked about the impossibility of discussions while bombing was going on.

At this point Chancellor Klaus joined the table to express great happiness that Gromyko and I were sitting together. Neither one of us dispelled his illusion.

I do not know whether Gromyko will pursue the matter further when the four foreign ministers meet briefly with Quaison-Sackey this afternoon or when we all assemble for the opera tonight.

Thompson and I both have the impression that Gromyko's attitude clearly means that the Salinger talk was of little substance and that we should now merely consider what kind of signal we wish to get back by way of Salinger as a part of the closing out process.



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I do not believe that we should assume from Gromyko's remarks that we ourselves should not put to Moscow our own most serious views of the situation, whether they are willing to discuss them or not. It is quite clear, however, that Gromyko wanted me to believe that they are not prepared to work toward a settlement in Hanoi and Peiping and that, indeed, unless we abandon our effort in South Viet-Nam there will be very serious consequences ahead.

E. Resuming the Bombing

Having thus been unmistakably rebuffed by Moscow, Hanoi, and Peking, the President determined on the evening of May 16 that the bombing raids should be resumed, beginning on the morning of May 18 Saigon time. In addition to the ROLLING THUNDER XV execute message sent by the JCS to CINCPAC on the 16th, Secretary Rusk sent messages of a political nature to Saigon, London, and Ottawa on May 17, so that the action could be cleared with Premier Quat (which Taylor promptly accomplished), and so that the foreign ministers of the Commonwealth countries would be informed beforehand. 141/

You should see Fon Min immediately to inform that beginning Tuesday morning, Saigon time, bombing of North Viet-Nam will be resumed by US and South Vietnamese forces, marking the end of a five-day suspension.

You should convey message from me that we regret that the reception of the other side to the idea of a pause was not merely negative but hostile. Gromyko told Rusk that our message to Dobrynin on subject was "insulting." Nevertheless we do not exclude possibility of other such attempts in future.

There will be no public announcement of the resumption of bombing. When press questions are asked, it will be pointed out that there have been and may again be periods when no bombing will take place in response to operational factors and that we do not discuss these operational questions.

Ambassador Kohler, upon receiving word of the resumption, suggested that the US might inform the NATO Council and the 17 non-aligned nations of our actions, in advance of any resumption, to underline the seriousness of the President's response to the Unaligned Appeal. The Department, however, responded negatively to Kohler's suggestion: 142/

There will be no official public statement from here concerning suspension or resumption. Decision at highest levels is to avoid any discussion Project MAYFLOWER, which now

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concluded, outside of restricted circle designated when Project begun. Despite disappointing response, we wish to keep open channel with Soviets on this subject and we hope eventually with DRV via Soviets. We feel that use of this channel another time might be precluded if we appear to have carried through Project MAYFLOWER solely for credit it might earn us with third parties and public opinion in general. Therefore we would not now wish inform NATO Council and 17 Non-aligned countries.

Only British, Canadians, Australians, UN Secretary General and Korean President Park (here on state visit) were in fact informed in advance of resumption bombing and also of negative outcome of soundings of other side.

In addition to this limited circle of allied intimates, a larger circle of friendly governments was provided with Ambassadorial briefings on the bombing pause after the resumption. An instruction to this effect went out to American ambassadors in New Delhi, Tokyo, Bangkok, Vientiane, Manila, Wellington, and Paris: 143/

You should take first opportunity see Pri. Minister, Fon Min, or other appropriate high level official to inform him that the U.S. and South Vietnamese Governments suspended bombing against North Viet-Nam for a period of five days which ended on May 18. The initiation of this pause in bombing was accompanied by an approach by us to the Governments of the Soviet Union and North Viet-Nam which took note of repeated calls from that side for cessation of bombing and their statements that discussions could not take place while bombing continued. Unfortunately the reception of our approach was not merely negative but hostile...In view of the complete absence of any constructive response, we have decided the bombing must be resumed. Nevertheless we do not exclude possibility of other such attempts in the future.

You should add that the record of the past several weeks is discouraging in that Communists and particularly Peking appear intent on rejecting every effort from whatever quarter to open up contacts and conversations which might lead to a resolution of the Viet-Nam situation. The rejection of President Johnson's April 7 proposals for unconditional discussions, of the appeal of the Seventeen Non-aligned countries and of President Radhakrishnan's proposal all illustrate the point together with Peking and Hanoi's obvious efforts to obstruct the convening of a conference on Cambodia. We will nevertheless continue to explore all possibilities for constructive discussion, meanwhile maintaining with the Government of South Viet-Nam our joint military efforts to preserve that country's freedom.

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On the evening of May 18, the DRV Foreign Ministry issued a statement denouncing the gesture as a "deceitful maneuver designed to pave the way for new U.S. acts of war," and insisted U.S. planes had, since May 12, repeatedly intruded into DRV airspace "for spying, provocative and strafing activities."

Communist China's Foreign Ministry issued a statement May 21 fully endorsing Hanoi's position and denouncing the suspension with characteristic intemperateness.

F. Aftermath

A still somewhat ambiguous diplomatic move was made by Hanoi on May 18, shortly after the bombing had been resumed.

It appears that in Paris, on the morning of May 18, Mai Ven Bo, head of the DRV economic delegation there, approached the Asian Direction of the Quai d'Orsay to explain the reasons for the DRV's rejection of the Radhakrishnan proposals (involving a cordon sanitaire by Afro-Asian troops along the 17th parallel). More important, however, Bo explained with text in hand that the Pham Van Dong Four Points, enunciated on April 8, should not be isolated from the declaration that had followed the four points. He then softened the language of that declaration by pointing out that the four points constituted the "best basis" from which to find the "most just" solution, and that recognition of these principles would create favorable conditions for a solution of the problem and would open the possibility of convocing a conference.

When asked if Hanoi recognized that realization of its proposed "principle of withdrawal" of American forces would depend upon the "conclusions of a negotiation," Bo responded "exactly," and indicated that if there were agreement on the "bases," the "ways and means" of application of "principles" would be found and in a peaceful manner; the possibilities were many; a way out (porte de sortie) should be found for the US; "our suggestion humiliates no one."

This happening, which occurred on May 18, was first reported by a Quai official to the US Embassy's Political Counsellor in Paris unofficially on May 19, in a highly glossed version, making it appear that the DRV was clearly responding to the bombing pause by a significant softening of its position on "prior conditions." In the official version that Lucet, the Director of Political Affairs of the French Foreign Office conveyed to the DCM on May 20, however, the continued ambiguity of the DRV position -- as to whether or not recognition of the four points remained a precondition to talks of any sort -- was fully revealed.

This ambiguity was in no sense resolved a few weeks later, when Blair Seaborn raised this question with the DRV Foreign Minister in Hanoi. The U.S. had asked Seaborn in late May to seek an appointment with Pham

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Van Dong and on its behalf reiterate the March message and U.S. determination to persist in the defense of South Vietnam, to regret that Hanoi had not responded positively to the various recent initiatives, including the bombing pause, and to state that, nevertheless, the United States remained ready "to consider the possibility of a solution by reciprocal actions on each side." If the Vietnamese brought up Pham Van Dong's four points, Seaborn was authorized to endeavor to establish whether Hanoi insisted that they be accepted as the condition for negotiations. On June 3, Seaborn succeeded in gaining an audience with the DRV Foreign Minister (and concurrent Deputy Premier) Nguyen Duy Trinh, who reluctantly heard him out after stating that the U.S. position was too well known to require restatement. Trinh's reaction to the message was totally negative, and in the exchange preceding its recitation he studiously avoided going beyond the vague statement that Pham Van Dong's four points were the "basis for solution of the Vietnam question."144/

• As there was considerable misunderstanding concerning the Mai Van Bo approach of May 18, and misleading accounts of it were circulating, the State Department informed several U.S. ambassadors (Saigon, Paris, Bonn) of what it considered the true facts in the case. 145/

Facts are that bombing was actually resumed on morning May 18 Saigon time. Subsequently on morning May 18, Paris time, but undoubtedly on antecedent instructions, DRV economic delegate in Paris, Mai Van Bo, approached Quai urgently for appointment. His message was to explain negative Hanoi attitude toward Indian proposal (cessation of hostilities on both sides and Afro-Asian force) but second, and more important, to discuss Pham Van Dong's four points originally stated April 8 and later included in Hanoi statement referring to appeal of 17 Non-aligned nations... Bo repeated four points with slight variations from public statements, apparently softening language by indicating that four points might be "best basis" for settlement and apparently insisting less strongly that their recognition was required as condition to negotiations. During course of conversations, French asked whether withdrawal US forces visualized as prior condition or as resulting from negotiations, and Bo responded that latter was correct.

French passed us this message on May 20 (delaying two days) so that we had in fact resumed well before we heard of it. More important, message still left ambiguity whether recognition of four points remained precondition to talks of any sort. Accordingly, we saw no reason to alter conclusion based on Hanoi propaganda denunciation of pause, plus fact that pace of Hanoi-directed basic actions in South had continued and even increased -- that Hanoi not ready to respond to pause and that we must resume.

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Subsequently, Canadian ICC Representative, Seaborn, visited Hanoi commencing May 31. He himself raised some questions with DRV Foreign Minister and response indicated DRV evasive, and in effect negative, apparently taking position recognition four points, plus some element US withdrawal, were preconditions to any talks.

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XYZ (MAI VAN BO CONTACTS)  
MAY 1965 - FEBRUARY 1966

SUMMARY and ANALYSIS

1. Ambiguous Beginning

The U.S. contacts with Mai Van Bo, Head of the DRVN Delegation in Paris, developed in three stages: first, through the French Government; then, through a free-lancing private U.S. citizen; and finally by means of an authorized but "unofficial" U.S. representative.

The timing of Bo's initial approach to the French and the precise content of his message represent two important and ambiguous points. With respect to the timing, the French claimed that Bo made a "fairly pressing approach" to them on the morning of May 18th, just prior to the resumption of U.S. bombings. In fact, this meeting must have occurred after the resumption. The earliest that Bo saw the French was probably 9:00 a.m., Paris time. The bombings had resumed at 8:00 a.m., Saigon time -- in other words, eight hours earlier. There was, then, sufficient time for Hanoi to cable Bo and tell him not to make the approach. Moreover, it seems clear that the message was probably drafted before the bombings resumed, with the signal to execute delivery being given after the resumption.

This technique of delaying response to a bombing pause until a few hours after the pause ended was repeated in Rangoon on January 31, after the 37-day suspension. The DRV probably used this gap for two purposes: propaganda and bargaining. The propaganda value was potentially high -- couldn't the U.S. wait a few more hours before plunging back to the attack? More importantly, it was a way of cancelling out the U.S. negotiating blue chip. The DRV would not respond with the threat of resumption hanging over its head, since this could be read as a sign of weakness. If it were to enter negotiations, the DRV seemed bent on doing so only after the threat of bombing resumption had been minimized (public declaration on cessation?) and only after the U.S. conveyed a "recognition" of the Four Points.

It was this latter element, the meaning of the Four Points, that represented the second ambiguity. Since the April 8, 1965 enunciation of the Four Points, the U.S. had been interpreting our acceptance as a precondition for negotiations. While Pham Van Dong explained their meaning as the "basis for the soundest political settlement" (underlining added), the U.S. tended to focus on what followed: "if this basis is recognized, favorable conditions will be created for the peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem, and it will be possible to consider the

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reconvening of an international conference along the pattern of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Vietnam." Hanoi had done nothing to clarify this issue. Indeed, when Seaborn, on June 6, 1965, asked Trinh whether the points were preconditions or ultimate goals, Trinh deliberately remained vague.

The two slightly contradictory messages conveyed to us by the French on May 19 (by Asian Director Manac'h) and on May 20 (by Director of Political Affairs Lucet) did not lift the veil, but they were suggestive. The first message, given in "strict confidence," indicated that Bo stated that the Four Points "were to be considered not rpt not prior conditions but rather as working principles for a negotiation which should, in the DRVN view, represent ultimate goal of settlement in Vietnam." The second message, conveyed officially, stated: "Recognition these 'principles' would create favorable conditions for solution problem and would 'open' possibility of convocation conference like Geneva, 1954." This message also included a bonus from Bo--U.S. troop withdrawal would depend on the "conclusions of a negotiation." The U.S. did not follow up this approach to the French, despite an inquiry at the Quai by Bo on June 14 as to what had happened.

Private enterprise and American ingenuity entered the picture in July 1965, when Mr. Arkas-Duntov of the Dreyfus Fund applied through a French journalist friend to see Bo. The first Bo-Duntov meeting took place on July 16. Bo seemed very forthcoming, making references to self-determination, delay in the withdrawal of U.S. troops and not making much of U.S. bombings in the north. Against State Department wishes, Duntov saw Bo again on August 5. In response to a question, Bo said he would be prepared to receive a U.S. official if he makes clear the U.S. acceptance of the Four Points.

At this point, the USG moved in by dispatching Edmund Gullion, former U.S. DCM in Saigon but now a private citizen, to contact Bo. Bo (R) and Gullion (X) had four meetings: August 6, 15, 18, and September 3. Bo did not show up for an arranged fifth meeting, scheduled for September 7. Y, another ex-FSO, saw Bo only once and nothing was said, and Z never existed. It is obvious that "XYZ" should be renamed "X".

The talks between X and R represent the most serious mutual effort to resolve matters of substance between the U.S. and the DRV before and since.

It is striking that the first flirtations, from which the contact developed, were Bo's approaches to the Quai in May and June of 1965. This is just the time at which Seaborn returned from Hanoi with the conclusion that the "DRV is not now interested in any negotiations." Seaborn was turned off just as Bo apparently began an effort to awaken U.S. interest more directly in Paris. The Russians, who had tried to foster negotiations about Vietnam through a conference on Cambodia and in other ways, also expressed their unwillingness to try further at about this time.



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2. X's Guidance -- Flexibility and Pressures

The U.S. was sending X with the intention of seeking peace from a position of U.S. strength. X was to show a desire for ending the conflict along lines "compatible with the Four Points, but he was also to say that the prolongation of the war" is bound to lead to progressively larger U.S. pressures and long-term China control of North Vietnam. X was to convey that pressures in the U.S. to widen the war were growing and that "it would be increasingly harder to exercise restraint."

X took this guidance seriously. At the end of the second meeting when R refused to accept X's formulation of a statement announcing the reconvening of the Geneva Conference, X threatened to call off all future contacts. It was R who demurred and urged the third meeting -- as he had taken the initiative in setting up the second. Except for the last meeting when R grew heated about recent U.S. escalations, R was serious and responsive. Throughout and even at this last meeting, there were no ideological harangues.

3. Convening a Conference

The most basic point to emerge from the X and R contacts with respect to convening a conference was made by R at the August 6 meeting. R said that there was a difference between "discussions" and "settlement." "There could not be settlement without recognition of the principles within the 4 Points." R did not indicate what "recognition" meant. Later, in an August 31 speech (and repeated in the DRV Memorandum of September 23), Pham Van Dong made this point more ambiguous, but did not change it. He stated: "This 4 Point stand must be solemnly accepted by the USG before a political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be contemplated." This formulation, in turn, differed from Ho's demand for "tangible proofs" of U.S. acceptance on the 4 points. In the Dong speech and the DRV memo, U.S. acceptance of the 4 Points is pegged to a "political settlement" and not explicitly to starting negotiations. It is probable, nevertheless, that since DRV viewed the 4 points as "principles" and not, as the Americans called them, "preconditions," the DRV always intended that the U.S. in one way or another give evidence of acceptance prior to serious negotiations. Successful negotiations to the DRV had to be based on these principles. If the United States would not accept the principles prior to negotiations, there could be no strong presumption on the DRV part that the negotiations would be successful.

These were the first of many distinctions that Hanoi was to make among words like contacts, talks, discussions, negotiations, and peace. In June 1966, Ronning learned from Trinh that neither the 4 nor the 5 points were preconditions for "talks" -- a new term at that time. If the U.S. stopped the bombing completely, Trinh told Ronning, the DRV would "talk." Ronning conveyed these distinctions to the USG, but they were lost sight of until the fall of 1967.

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The U.S. position throughout as enunciated in President Johnson's Johns Hopkins speech of April 1965, was for "unconditional discussions." If, however, the DRV were to demand preconditions, for example, a bombing halt, the U.S. would insist on reciprocity. In other words we would make no preconditions, but if the other side did so, we would have some of our own.

X and R reached agreement at their August 15 meeting on a Geneva Conference forum. R had previously told Duntov (at their second meeting) that Geneva was the "only possible" procedure for negotiations. At this same meeting with Duntov, R said that the UN would be folly since the Chinese are not represented. At the August 6 meeting between X and R, R rejected the UN and other interlocutors, saying that Geneva was a "valid base, since it brought the interested bodies together."

The DRV Foreign Ministry Memo of September 23, however, was less specific on these points. With respect to the UN, it confined its denunciation of the organization to the use of formal UN machinery, declaring only that it will regard as null and void any UN resolution and any "solution" which seeks UN intervention. This memo did not explicitly reject mediation attempts by the UN Secretary General and others in the UN organization. With respect to the Geneva Conference, the memo says that the Vietnam problem falls within the competence of the "participants" of the 1954 Geneva Agreements.

X and R, at their August 15 meeting even went so far as to discuss a statement to announce the reconvening of the Geneva Conference. X offered the following statement: "In order to secure and preserve the fundamental right of the Vietnamese people, etc., as affirmed in the Geneva Accords, a meeting of Geneva conferees would be held which would take up Pham Van Dong's 4 points and other propositions." R expressed agreement with the first part of the sentence, but disagreed with the latter. (The disagreement on the latter could have signalled continued DRV insistence on the need to accept the 4 Points as the basis for negotiations.)

The agreement that a Geneva Conference would be the appropriate forum was clear. What was not clear was the issue of "participants." The U.S. position was that we were prepared to negotiate with "any government," and that all elements of South Vietnamese society could participate in free elections. X was told, in his instructions for the third meeting, that the U.S. was opposed to coalition government now, but that "groups" could attend a peace conference and express their views.

The DRV position was tough but ambiguous. Ho, on August 15, implied that only the NLF could participate in an international conference, and stated that the Saigon authorities were "a creation of the Americans...." On August 31, Dong stated that the Front was the "only genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people," and the "real master of the situation." On September 23, Foreign Ministry Memo stated that there could be no

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"negotiations on any South Vietnam problem without NFLSV having its decisive say." Later, on May 6, 1966, R said to Segonzac that the NLF was the "only valid negotiator," but that certain groups like the Buddhists which were not dominated by the U.S. could participate. Because the other conditions necessary for convening a conference were never met, it remains unclear how far either side would have departed from its opening position.

With respect to participants other than the GVN and NLF, there was nothing said, but presumably this was not necessary. By virtue of their agreement on the reconvening of a Geneva Conference, it could have been assumed that all former participants in the 1954 conference would attend again.

4. The Bombing Issue

One of the interesting features of the R and X contacts was the relative absence from discussion of the bombing issue -- until their last meeting on September 3. In R's initial meeting with Duntov, he only mentioned the bombings in passing and with mild reproof. When, in the second meeting with R, X brought up the issue of reconvening the Geneva Conference, R did not mention U.S. bombings. At their August 18 meeting, the change began when R revealed to X that the DRV viewed the cessation of the bombings as "tangible evidence" of acceptance in principle of the 4 Points. From the August 31 Dong speech on, however, the issue was brought back to prominence. Dong raised the issue in a rather odd way. He said that the U.S. must "put an end to escalation (emphasis added) in air attacks against North Vietnam," prior to negotiations. In his September 3 meeting with X, R said that the U.S. had intensified bombings in the North and ground actions in the South in the last 15 days as an attempt to force negotiations on the DRV. R added: "Bombings must stop unilaterally, immediately, totally, and definitively. Then, there would be a possibility for negotiations." Again, on January 29, 1966, R indicated: "The pause in bombing is not negotiable...we have always demanded that these bombings stop as a prerequisite of any negotiations...."

In other words, the bombings did not receive any prominence at all until the third meeting when they were indicated as "tangible evidence," and they were not raised as a serious issue in dispute until the 4th and final meeting. One explanation of this may be that the DRV knew that the bombing issue would complicate the discussion of other issues, and it did not want to so complicate the discussions until the U.S. had revealed the full extent of the concessions that it might make. In any event, from this point on, the DRV position was that it would not trade anything for a cessation of the U.S. bombardments in the north. In March, 1966, the DRV made clear to Ronning that the cessation of such bombardments was a prerequisite for "talks."

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5. Opposing Settlement Proposals: The DRV's 4 Points and Ours

Both sides' settlement proposals nominally included the four principles laid down in the DRV's 4 Points (withdrawal of "foreign" military forces; non-intervention; self-determination for SVN; peaceful reunification), but they held quite different views on content.

The distance between them is illustrated by another topic they touched on, cease-fire provisions. Neither side wished an early cease-fire. Both feared it would permit the other to consolidate its position prior to the final settlement. In other words, both expected the final settlement to be much more to their liking than the status quo. (For the U.S. view, see 8/18/65; for the DRV, see 9/23/65.)

A. Withdrawal of "foreign" forces

The DRV 4 Points demanded the withdrawal of U.S. troops, military personnel, weapons, bases and alliances with SVN. Nothing was said publicly about NVA forces in SVN, but neither did DRV declaratory policy during XYZ specifically deny their presence. In private, when pressed by X, R did not deny DRV troop presence in SVN (8/18/65), or even that the 325th NVA Division was in SVN, but claimed it was not then engaged in military operations (9/3/65). After the contact had ended, again speaking privately, R said there were no regular northern troops in SVN, but that northern volunteers might have joined the NLF (1/27/66). While conceding little, this DRV posture permitted the discussions to include provisions for mutual troop withdrawal.

On the timing of U.S. withdrawal, X consistently argued that there would be no problem in the event of an agreement between the two sides on an internal solution for SVN, though the specifics he envisioned grew progressively less liberal as the episode went along. He told Duntov in July that withdrawal would be a technical problem, as easily solved as with the French in 1954. It could take place over 2 or 3 years (7/16/65). To X in August, he said that the final settlement should see troop withdrawals completed (8/18/65). By September, R was telling X that U.S. troops must leave before elections were held (9/3/65). Several months later, speaking to the journalist Segonzac, he gave this as Hanoi's concept for U.S. withdrawal:

"It contemplates three stages -- in the first stage, the US would agree on the principle of their departure before the South Vietnamese settled by themselves their problems, which cannot be resolved so long as a foreign army is on their national territory. The second stage is that of negotiation. The third stage is departure." (5/6/66)

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The principle that troop withdrawal would have to be mutual was apparently accepted by R at the second meeting with X (8/18/65), and reaffirmed at the third (8/18/65). At the fourth, however, he pulled back completely and denied with agitation that there had been any inconsistency in his successive positions or between them and the official DRV position (9/3/65).

The US accepted in principle all the DRV demands regarding withdrawal at the first meeting with R, stipulating however that they apply to the DRV as well as SVN and that they include regrouping and redeployment of indigenous forces as well as withdrawal of "foreign military and quasi-military personnel and weapons" (8/6/65). As X later explained, this included all persons with military functions and all support equipment related to the war effort. The regroupment provisions were intended to separate the combatants (8/18/65).

The U.S. did not specify the timing it thought appropriate for withdrawal, except to indicate mutually agreed stages as among the topics for negotiations. X was instructed to give North Vietnamese infiltration of men and supplies as the sole reason for the U.S. presence. If the infiltration stopped, the U.S. would go home (8/9/65). He stressed that withdrawal would have to be "phased" and "balanced" (meaning mutual and at rates to be negotiated between the two sides); R accepted these modifiers without inquiring into their meaning (8/15/65).

B. Non-interference

Although the two sides found different words to express this principle, the issue gave them little difficulty and was scarcely discussed by X and R. The U.S. noted that "a sovereign government should have the right to call for help if necessary in its own self-defense," and in other ways left room for our SEATO commitments to be observed. There is no indication of the DRV response to this reservation.

C. Self-determination for SVN

Before the contact between X and R was established, R had spoken to Duntov of self-determination as "the one basic premise" needed for a solution to the Vietnam problem (7/16/65). At his July 28 press conference, President Johnson said, "we will always insist that the people of SVN shall have the right of choice, the right to shape their own destiny in free elections in the south, or throughout all Vietnam under international supervision...." Duntov urged Bo to see him again, suggesting that this statement had been influenced in some degree by his (Duntov's) report of their first meeting (End July):

The possibility of a convergence of views on this issue may have motivated the DRV in permitting the contact between X and R.

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As the contact developed, though, US/DRV differences about what constituted self-determination simply came into sharper focus, undermining the "premise" on which agreement over the conditions for troop withdrawal might have rested. In the end, troop withdrawal and self-determination became a chicken-or-the-egg type of conundrum. As R parodied the U.S. position and rebutted it as follows: The U.S. "will withdraw from Vietnam 'as soon as the Vietnamese will be left to solve their problems alone.' In fact, the Vietnamese will be left to solve their problems alone precisely after the Americans have left." (1/27/65)

The DRV 4 Points call for "the internal affairs of SVN to be settled by the SVN people themselves in accordance with the NLF Program...." This was amplified on many occasions, including Pham Van Dong's National Day address of August 31, 1965--between the third and fourth contacts--to mean that the NLF "is now the real master...in SVN. It must have a decisive say in the settlement of the SVN question." As R had done earlier with Duntov, Pham Van Dong heaped scorn on the "Saigon Quisling administration...." Prior to this speech, the issue was apparently passed over lightly by X and R. At the fourth and last meeting, R took a line similar to Pham Van Dong's speech and modified his earlier position to require U.S. troop withdrawal before elections in SVN (9/3/65). Much later, he explained himself to Segonzac. Without condemning the principle of elections, he asked, "How can elections be held in a country over which no authority is exercised?" Did he mean the exercise of authority is decisive, not the electoral process? No doubt. In which case, the question of who should organize the elections--the NLF with DRV help, or the GVN with U.S. help--would be the real issue.

The US envisaged no NLF role "as of right" in SVN (9/8/65), and would not guarantee a role for it before elections because to do so would be contrary to "free determination." Individual members of the NLF could participate in the political process. At most, the future of the NLF should be a matter for discussion, not something settled in principle before negotiations began (8/15/65). In the event of a ceasefire, it was our intention to insist on the GVN's right to operate throughout SVN (9/1/65).

D. Peaceful reunification

The two sides offered virtually identical wording in their provisions for peaceful reunification. The U.S. required that reunification come about "on the basis of free determination" (8/6/65), a phrase absent from the DRV's fourth point, but parallel to an elaboration given by R at the first meeting (8/6/65). R stated then, as he had previously and would again, that the DRV was not in a hurry to see reunification accomplished. Clearly, though, it did expect a settlement that would insure reunification ultimately, namely the NLF coming to power in SVN (7/16/65).

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#### 6. Ho/Bo Differences?

On the morning of the second meeting, Le Monde published an interview with Ho Chi Minh. Ho essentially reiterated the DRV's 4 Points, insisting at each turn on the NLF as the sole authentic representative of the SVN people and brushing aside the GVN--"there is no question of Saigon authorities, a creation of the Americans...." Thus he was for self-determination, on the basis of the NLF program. He accepted an autonomous SVN for as long as the SVN people desired, noting that reunification would come by free consent, according to the program of the NLF.

When asked a complex question--would the DRV enter discussions with the U.S. on withdrawal if the U.S. affirmed the principles of Geneva, and would an end to U.S. air strikes against the DRV be preconditions for a settlement--Ho replied, "To this end, the USG must give tangible proofs that it accepts the Four Point stand of the DRV...; it must immediately stop the air attacks..., stop forthwith the aggressive war against the south..., and withdraw from there all US troops and weapons" (8/15/65).

This aroused consternation in Washington, which wondered if he was making immediate US troop withdrawal a precondition for an "effort at settlement" (8/17/65). Given the elegance of the French newspaper's question, however, it is not at all clear what Ho meant. He could equally have been laying down preconditions for a termination of the war (rather than the opening of negotiations), or simply leveling a demand without making compliance a precondition for anything. At the third meeting, R assured X that his statements on phasing and balancing troop withdrawals were the accepted DRV position (8/18/65).

#### 7. Why Did the Contact Break Down?

Until the last meeting between X and R, all was proceeding at a better than expected pace. At this September 3rd conversation, R turned cold. He insisted on immediate cessation of U.S. bombings, and he pulled back on his agreement for the staged withdrawal of forces from SVN. Undoubtedly, a decision was made after the third meeting to wipe the slate clean at the fourth--and then, to schedule the fifth just in case something new arose. What happened between August 18 (the third meeting) and September 3? Did, in fact, the breakdown of these conversations have anything to do with the surrounding events, or was it part and parcel of the DRV's negotiating strategy all along? Or, could it have had something to do with events and relations external to the contact itself, such as China?

Could the breakdown of conversations have been related to ground action in South Vietnam? It could have, but the major announcement on U.S. force inputs to this ground action was made by the President on

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July 28, that is, well before the initial X and R meeting. If the DRV regarded President Johnson's announced U.S. force increase from 75,000 to 125,000 and his saying that "additional forces will be needed later and they will be sent as requested" as a threat, they might not have allowed the meetings in the first place. But it could also be that the impact of this announcement and the impact of the U.S. forces actually on the ground and fighting in South Vietnam was not felt until a month later.

U.S. bombings in the North is another possible explanation for the breakdown. In his August 31 speech, Dong said: "To achieve these aggressive purposes, the U.S. imperialist further step up the escalation of the war in North Vietnam in an attempt to intimidate the Vietnamese people...and are threatening further escalation!" He accused the U.S. of "bombing and strafing densely populated areas, many hospitals...and public utility installations such as the Ban Thach Dam..." While there is no evidence on our attacking population and hospitals, it is true that we first struck the Ban Thach Hydropower Plant on August 23. Other U.S. first strikes in this period that could have affected Dong's speech were: Lang Bun RR Bridge on July 29, Nam Dinh Thermopower Plant on August 4, and the Bich Phuong Lock on August 23. Measured in sorties or tons, however, overall U.S. air activity in the north in August was not higher than the previous month, July.

Another possible explanation for the breakdown may lie in North Vietnam's relationship to the warring giants of the socialist world-- China and the USSR. It was on September 2, 1965, that Lin Piao gave his famous wars of national liberation speech. Some scholars speculate that this speech surfaced previously existing differences between Hanoi and Peking over how to fight the war in Vietnam (the Chinese arguing for a more prolonged, lower keyed, approach and the Vietnamese for a more militant one) and how to order the political battle (the Chinese arguing for united front tactics and the Vietnamese pushing for social revolution).

It can also be argued that the DRV broke off the contact simply because it had accomplished some purpose. This purpose might have been, by seeming forthcoming and using the right words (e.g., self-determination), to see how far the Americans would go in indicating their fallback positions. Hanoi could have been testing the U.S. position after the bombing pause to see if it had stiffened or softened. To Hanoi, pause and subsequent escalation were signs that the war in SVN was going badly for us. Perhaps they reasoned that these signs would be reflected in new and softer U.S. objectives. Bo did deliver his first message to the French right after the bombing resumed, then inquired in June as to what had happened with it, and it was the U.S. that delayed making contact until August.

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Hanoi and Washington had never had a private and direct talk about settlement terms. This may have seemed an easy first way of proceeding. Since the contact was not with an American official, the exchanges were always disownable, and in fact, R ultimately did renege on points of agreement. When it became clear that the U.S. was not about to make far-reaching concessions, Hanoi could have viewed this as a demonstration of clear intransigence and decided to break off.

Because the R and X exchanges were so responsive and productive and because these exchanges were severed so abruptly, no explanation is really satisfying. It seems that this dialogue between Americans and Vietnamese was as mysterious in its ending as it was fruitful and suggestive in its beginnings.

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XYZ (MAI VAN BO CONTACTS): MAY 1965 - FEBRUARY 1966

May 19, 1965

French Foreign Ministry Asian Director told U.S. Embassy Political Counselor "in strict confidence" that on May 18, just prior to the resumption of U.S. bombings, Mai Van Bo (head of the DRVN Delegation, Paris) had made a fairly pressing approach to the French.

Bo wanted to understand that Hanoi's four points "were to be considered not rpt not as prior conditions but rather as working principles for a negotiation which should, in DRVN view, represent ultimate goal of settlement in Vietnam." Bo said that he was speaking with authorization, and the French source believed that the Bo approach was responsive to the U.S. suspension of bombing.

(Paris 6582).

May 20, 1965

Lucet, Director of Political Affairs of the French Foreign Office, called on the U.S. DCM in Paris to convey a message from Hanoi--although he said "we were not asked to convey message.."

He went on to deliver a message that substantially differed from the one transmitted by his own Asian Director. According to Lucet, "Bo stressed that the four points should not be 'isolated' from 'declaration' which followed." He went on: "The four points constituted 'best base' from which to find 'most just' solution. Recognition these 'principles' would create favorable conditions for solution problem and would 'open' possibility of convocation conference like Geneva, 1954."

In response to a question on U.S. withdrawal Bo agreed ["exactly"] that the withdrawal of American forces would depend upon the "conclusions of a negotiation." Bo went on: "If there were agreement on the 'basis', then a 'ways and means' of application of 'principles' would be found and in peaceful manner;... 'our suggestion humiliates no one'."

With respect to the discrepancy between this message and the public May 18 Hanoi communique denouncing "so called cessation bombings," Lucet said the latter was "for public consumption."

(Paris 6612).

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May 22, 1965

State cabled appreciation for the Lucet information and asked that Lucet be told we continued to follow the matter with interest and that he should continue to keep us informed." (State 6056).

June 14, 1965

Bo called on Manac'h. Manac'h told Bo that his message of May 18 had been transmitted to the Americans, and Manac'h said the Americans were "deeply interested."

Bo asked if Manac'h could give him the name of the American diplomat with whom he discussed this matter. Manac'h did not do so.

(Paris 7071).

July, 1965

Mr. Urah Arkas-Duntov, a partner in the Dreyfus Fund, on his own tact, took steps to arrange a meeting with Mai Van Bo. Duntov contacted Messr. M. Parisot, of France Soir, and Parisot, knowing that Eli Maissi, another journalist, had good connections with Bo, asked Maissi to arrange an interview for Duntov. Bo, at first, refused to see Duntov. Later, Maissi convinced Bo that such an interview might be an advantageous way of communicating to the U.S. at no political risk.

July 16, 1965 (First Duntov-Bo meeting)

Maissi and Parisot were present. The following were the main points of the meeting:

"1. Hanoi's Attitude toward Negotiations. Duntov asked why Hanoi would not negotiate. Bo responded that Hanoi did want to negotiate, and that there were ample contacts in which negotiations might take place. However, there must first be a basis for negotiations. Bo first said that the proper basis would be the Geneva Accords of 1954. He then added that these accords are often misinterpreted and misquoted, and that the true interpretation is found in the Four Points laid out by Pham Van Dong. Thus these formed the proper basis for negotiations.

"2. Unification of Viet-Nam. Bo stressed very strongly that Viet-Nam is one country and cannot be divided. When asked whether the US had not made clear its willingness to negotiate unconditionally, Bo replied that the President's Baltimore speech of April 7 was a trap, and that the President was really

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laying down conditions by his insistence on the necessity of an independent South Viet-Nam and guarantees for such a South Viet-Nam.

"One of the participants asked Bo whether his position was not in conflict with statements by the National Liberation Front to the effect that the Front favored an independent South Viet-Nam. Bo seemed somewhat taken aback by this question, but recovered and said that this would be all right, since an 'independent' government in South Viet-Nam would in fact decide to join the north.

"3. Internal Solution in South Viet-Nam. Bo insisted, somewhat emotionally, that there was one basic premise, self-determination by the South Vietnamese people, and that if this was accepted, a solution was possible. He referred at different times to the phrase, 'self-determination,' and to the Liberation Front program for the South (insistence on which, of course, is the third of Pham Van Dong's Four Points). In referring to 'self-determination,' Bo explained that, if this principle was recognized, an independent government could be formed. However, he went on to say that no 'traitor' could be included, apparently meaning by this that at least the present South Vietnamese military leaders would be excluded.

"4. Withdrawal of US Forces. Bo was asked what time schedule would be required--in the event of an agreement for an independent South Viet-Nam--on the withdrawal of US forces. Bo replied that this was no problem and that it was a technical detail that could be worked out as it had been with the French in 1954. The withdrawal could be discussed and could take place over a two- or three-year period. Bo related US withdrawal clearly, however, to acceptance of the principles he had laid down for 'independence' and 'self-determination' in South Viet-Nam.

"5. Cease-fire or Cessation in Bombings. Bo mentioned the bombings of the North only in passing and with mild reproof. He gave no indication that a cessation of bombing was required before there could be discussions."

Duntov reported all this to the State Department on July 29.

End July

State judged the Bo statements to be in accord with the Nhan Dan editorial of July 20, 1965.

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The background for the second Duntov-Bo meeting is quite confused. Duntov's story is that Maissi had phoned him, saying that Bo is very pleased with the President's press conference of July 28, 1965. Maissi asked Bo if there were any point in his seeing Duntov again and Bo said that it would be a good idea. Again, according to Duntov, Maissi then made the arrangements with Bo. Duntov conveyed this to the State Department and was told that "we are very interested in his information but that we would prefer that he hold off at this time." Duntov said that he understood.

Maissi's story is quite different. He said that on 30 July, Duntov telephoned him saying that he had conveyed the report of the first meeting to "certain friends in Washington," that he believed the President's press conference had been influenced to some degree by this report, and that this encouraged him to believe he should meet again with Bo.

August 5, 1965 (Second Duntov-Bo meeting)

Parisot and Maissi were again present.

Duntov told Bo that he had conveyed the results of the first meeting to friends in Washington. Bo said that he was not convinced of U.S. sincerity to negotiate.

Duntov asked Bo if he were prepared to receive an authorized USG official for the purpose of explaining the American position. Bo replied that if such an official will come to Paris, and if he makes it clear that the USG will accept the 4-point program, it would be possible to "halt the war."

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Also with respect to the four points, Bo initially insisted that only the NLF should represent SVN in peace negotiations-- but subsequently implied this was a matter for the South Vietnamese people to decide.

With respect to the machinery for the negotiations, Bo said that the UN would be folly since the Chinese are not represented. Bo argued that the only possible machinery for negotiations is a revival of the Geneva Accords procedures.

TEXT OF A STATEMENT ON VIETNAM BY PRESIDENT JOHNSON  
AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE OF JULY 28, 1965

"WE WILL STAND IN VIETNAM"

"....We have learned at a terrible and brutal cost that retreat does not bring safety and weakness does not bring peace.

"It is this lesson that has brought us to Vietnam. This is a different kind of war. There are no marching armies or solemn declarations. Some citizens of South Vietnam, at times with understandable grievances, have joined in the attack on their own government.

"But we must not let this mask the central fact that this is really war. It is guided by North Vietnam, and it is spurred by Communist China. Its goal is to conquer the South, to defeat American power, and to extend the Asiatic dominion of communism.

"There are great stakes in the balance.

"Most of the non-Communist nations of Asia cannot, by themselves and alone, resist growing might and the grasping ambition of Asian communism.

"Our power, therefore, is a very vital shield. If we are driven from the field in Vietnam, then no nation can ever again have the same confidence in American promise or in American protection.

"In each land the forces of independence would be considerably weakened and an Asia so threatened by Communist domination would certainly imperil the security of the United States itself.

"We did not choose to be the guardians at the gate, but there is no one else.

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"Nor would surrender in Vietnam bring peace, because we learned from Hitler at Munich that success only feeds the appetite of aggression. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another country, bringing with it perhaps ever larger and crueler conflict, as we have learned from the lessons of history.

"Moreover, we are in Vietnam to fulfill one of the most solemn pledges of the American Nation. Three Presidents-- President Eisenhower, President Kennedy, and your present President--over 11 years have committed themselves and have promised to help defend this small and valiant nation."

. . . . .

"What are our goals in that war-stained land?

"First, we intend to convince the Communists that we cannot be defeated by force of arms or by superior power. They are not easily convinced....

"I have today ordered to Vietnam the Air Mobile Division and certain other forces which will raise our fighting strength from 75,000 to 125,000 men almost immediately. Additional forces will be needed later, and they will be sent as requested. This will make it necessary to increase our active fighting forces by raising the monthly draft call from 17,000 over a period of time to 35,000 per month, and for us to step up our campaign for voluntary enlistments.

"After this past week of deliberations, I have concluded that it is not essential to order Reserve units into service now...."

. . . . .

"Second, once the Communists know, as we know, that a violent solution is impossible, then a peaceful solution is inevitable.

"We are ready now, as we have always been, to move from the battlefield to the conference table. I have stated publicly and many times, again and again, America's willingness to begin unconditional discussions with any government at any place at any time...."

. . . . .

"I made a similar request at San Francisco a few weeks ago, because we do not seek the destruction of any government, nor do we covet a foot of any territory, but we insist and we will



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always insist that the people of South Vietnam shall have the right of choice, the right to shape their own destiny in free elections in the south, or throughout all Vietnam under international supervision, and they shall not have any government imposed upon them by force and terror so long as we can prevent it.

"This was the purpose of the 1954 agreements which the Communists have now cruelly shattered. If the machinery of those agreements was tragically weak, its purposes still guide our action...."

. . . . .

August, 1965 - U.S. Reaction

At this point, Washington decided that Duntov should be kept out of the picture, and that an authorized but disownable U.S. representative should contact Bo directly. The U.S. representative was Edmund Gullion, former U.S. DCM in Saigon.

For purposes of the negotiating track, Gullion is referred to as X and Mai Van Bo is referred to as R.

Initial talking points for X:

1. These were to be simple and vague, but to set limits in which talks can safely take place.
2. X was to show desire for peace, and a free, independent, and unified Vietnam.
3. X was to say that the prolongation of conflict is bound to lead to progressively larger US pressures and long-term China control in NVN.
4. X was to insist that nothing can force the US out. Indeed, X was to say that pressures in the US to a wider war were growing and that it would be increasingly harder to exercise restraint.
5. If R does not seem receptive to a second meeting, then proceed as follows:

Theme: US is flexible to some degree. See, for example, the President's press conference of 28 July.

- a. US ready to discuss the four points.
- b. People of SVN have a right to peace and to determine

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their own destiny in free elections in SVN or throughout Vietnam under international supervision.

c. The four points, in some measure, parallel our own. Are we right in assuming these points are not stated as the only basis for starting talks and that other points can be discussed?

d. The four points mention withdrawal of forces. The US says it will do so once SVN "is secure from outside aggression."

e. We did not ask SVN to be our ally or to keep US bases there -- although a "sovereign government should have the right to call for help if necessary in its own self-defense."

f. US is not opposed to unification "at some future time under democratic processes."

Purpose of X's mission:

Primary -- To ascertain whether any serious purpose to negotiate exists and, if so, on what basis? Secondary -- R as possible contact? Third, clarify the four points (pre-requisite or best basis, timing on unification and elections, a settlement in accord with NLF program, timing on withdrawal). Fourth -- Collateral intelligence (DRV attitude on the Indian proposal, UN, China, NLF, and the possible use of Laos and Cambodia as a gambit for talks).

August 6, 1965 - First meeting between X and R

1. It was clear to X that R was aware that report of this meeting would go to US officials, and X believed that R spoke and made comments on instructions.

2. R said "convening of discussion should stipulate withdrawal as one of objectives...but confirmed that there would be 'modality' including staging and timing."

3. R rejected any UN intervention and other interlocutors such as France, Ghana, and the Commonwealth countries. Geneva, he said, was a "valid base, since it brought 'the interested bodies' together."

4. On reunification -- R said that it could take a long or short time but only on the basis of "free decision and consultation between Vietnamese people." Pending reunification, R expressed desire for freer movement between the zones, more trade, etc.

5. R said that the NLF was solely qualified to represent the South.

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6. R seemed to agree with X's statements about China to the effect that Hanoi should be worried about increasing Chinese influence and control.

7. On the four points, R said that there is a difference between "discussion and settlement." "There could not be settlement without recognition of the principles within the four points." This is the main point in the initial meeting.

8. R wanted to know U.S. reaction to a whole series of questions. R did not get a chance to ask questions since X went on to his pre-planned discussion about the U.S. version of the four points.

9. R says that he wants to ensure understanding of the DRV position and that contacts could be continued. R, himself, then suggested a date for the next meeting.

10. There was no mention whatsoever of US bombing in NVN.

11. X handed R a U.S. version of the four points. It was quite similar to the one we transmitted to the North Vietnamese in Rangoon in January of 1966.

"Point I - The basic rights of the Vietnamese people to peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity are recognized as set forth in the Geneva Accords of 1954. Obtaining compliance with the essential principles in the Accords is an appropriate subject for immediate, international discussions without preconditions and subsequent negotiations. Such discussions and negotiations should consider, among other things, appropriate means, including agreed stages, for the withdrawal of foreign military and quasi-military personnel and weapons from South and North Viet-Nam; the dismantling of foreign military bases in both areas; the cancellation of military alliances in contravention of the Accords; and the regrouping and redeployment of indigenous forces.

"Point II - Strict compliance with the military provisions of the Geneva Accords must be achieved in accordance with schedules and appropriate safeguards to be agreed upon in the said discussions and subsequent negotiations.

"Point III - The internal affairs of South and North Viet-Nam must be settled by the South and North Vietnamese peoples themselves in conformity with the principles of self-determination without any foreign interference.

"Point IV - The issue of reunification of Viet-Nam must be decided peacefully, on the basis of free determination by the peoples of South and North Viet-Nam without foreign interference."

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August 9, 1965 - McGeorge Bundy memo to the President

Talking points for next X meeting with R:

1. Let R do the talking this time and see if there is any give in his position.
2. Make clear U.S. interest in "unconditional Geneva Conference."
3. Instructions:
  - a. Purpose -- set stage for formal negotiations if possible.
  - b. Seek a no preconditions Geneva Conference and timing thereof.
  - c. On NLF -- Throw ball in R's court. What would he suggest, recognizing the U.S. view on negotiations between governments?
  - d. Stress that the sole reason for the U.S. presence in SVN is North Vietnamese infiltration of men and supplies. If infiltration stops, the U.S. will go home. This is a matter for Hanoi and no one else. Withdrawal of all forces must be the product of negotiations, not the preliminary.
  - e. If R brings up bombing, say that U.S. must view "suspension or cessation in the context of adequate reciprocal actions."
  - f. Would R want conference on Vietnam alone, or Vietnam plus Laos and Cambodia? How would he want the conference convened -- by invitation from the co-chairmen, privately, publicly, or by direct US-Vietnamese means?
  - g. U.S. envisages no NLF role as of right in SVN. Is this really a precondition of the DRV?
  - h. Pick up R's suggestion about greater contacts between the zones.

August 15, 1965 - Ho-Devillers interview in Le Monde

"Question: Does the position of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam remain that which was defined by

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Premier Pham Van Dong on 8 April, namely the South Vietnamese people must be left to solve their own affairs themselves without foreign interference and on democratic bases?

"Answer: That's right, and this on the basis of the program of the NFLSV, the sole authentic representative of the South Vietnam people.

"Question: Is the Democratic Republic of Vietnam ready to accept, so long as the South Vietnamese people will so desire, the existence of an autonomous South Vietnam, neutral of course, but disposed to establish with the north the relations implied by fraternity and a common nationality?

"Answer: Of course. Along with preparations for the national reunification of Vietnam which will be carried out through peaceful means, on the basis of the free consent of the north and the south, according to the program of the NFLSV and the program of the Vietnam Fatherland Front, our entire people are now struggling with their main and might against the U.S. aggression in our country to defend the DRV, liberate South Vietnam, and achieve peaceful reunification, highest goal of all the Vietnamese.

"Question: In case the U.S. Government would solemnly reaffirm its will to respect the basic principles of the Geneva agreements -- namely, unity and independence of Vietnam and prohibition of any base and any presence of foreign troops on its soil -- would the Government of the DRV agree to discuss with it the conditions and guarantees for disengagement which this U.S. declaration would imply? Also, in your opinion, is an end to the U.S. air attacks against the DRV territory a sine qua non condition leading to a settlement of the Vietnam problem?

"Answer: To this end, the U.S. Government must give tangible proofs that it accepts the four-point stand of the Government of the DRV which conforms to the essential political and military clauses of the 1954 Geneva agreement on Vietnam; it must immediately stop the air attacks against DRV territory, stop forthwith the aggressive war against the south of our country, and withdraw from there all U.S. troops and weapons. That is peace in honor; there is no other way out.

"Question: Do you think, Mr. President, that the solution to the Vietnam problem depends directly on the Hanoi and Washington governments -- without the holding of an international conference -- or do you think that it rests essentially with the NFLSV and the Vietnamese authorities in Saigon to find a settlement?

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"Answer: The four-point stand of the Government of the DRV gives a clear answer to this question, and there is no question of Saigon authorities, a creation of the Americans which is cursed by our people, and which nobody in the world takes seriously."

August 15, 1965 - Second meeting between X and R.

1. "R was rigid and even retrograde."
2. R said that Hanoi understood pressures in the US, but he implied that the American people would be opposed to the continuation of the war.
3. X asked if R had thoughts on U.S. version of the four points. R said that the U.S. interpretation was not a "correct solution." R did not take a clear position on the four points being stipulated or accepted in advance of the conference. R seemed to reject the U.S. version of the four points, but not definitively and finally.
4. X and R agreed on a Geneva Conference forum, but their discussion on preconditions was left vague. R tried to argue that the DRV did not oppose the Cambodian Conference initiative but was merely accepting Sihanouk's insistence on NLF participation in the government of SVN. X rebutted this saying that Sihanouk had ended up saying that both Saigon and the NLF could be represented.
5. R said that "Hanoi had noted President Johnson's reference to some form of meeting with NLF, but it was up to the US to give concrete details." He then launched into a tirade against the Saigon government.
6. X returned to the issue of getting the conference started. R did not mention bombing. R said the US "must leave Vietnam alone to work out its destiny...claimed that President Johnson recently said US must remain in Vietnam and could never leave it." X denied this.
7. X went back to the issue of infiltration and the withdrawal of all forces, saying that the U.S. was ready to put its promise of six months withdrawal to test. X said that withdrawal would have to be phased and balanced with a holding back of North Vietnamese forces as well. R indicated agreement. R then said "these accusations" of DRV activity in SVN are only recent -- the US has been sabotaging Vietnam since 1954.
8. R asked if X had seen Ho's response to Devillers. X said no, since he had not read the day's papers yet.
9. X returned to the issue of getting the conference going and discussed the terms of announcing such conference. X offered the

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following statement: "In order to secure and preserve the fundamental right of Vietnamese people, etc., as affirmed in the Geneva Accords, a meeting of Geneva conferees would be held which would take up Pham Van Dong's four points and other propositions." R expressed agreement with first part of sentence, but disagreed with the latter. X then said that maybe there was no use in future meetings. R was eager to set another meeting in case there should be "some change in the points of confrontation."

10. X noted some flexibility on R's part on the issue of troop withdrawal and NLF representation.

Instructions for next meeting

1. X should be tough, indicating that his reading of the Ho-Devillers interview was very discouraging.

2. U.S. will not guarantee role for the NLF before elections because to do so would be contrary to "free determination." However, South Vietnamese citizens in the NLF/VC could participate fully in the political process. Would Hanoi buy this, or, at least, discuss it?

3. Does Ho's interview really mean that the DRV would buy two separate Vietnams as long as South Vietnam desired it? X should suggest more definitive machinery for the free plebescite than existed in 1954.

4. In his interview, Ho asked for "tangible evidence" of U.S. acceptance of the four points. He said prior withdrawal of U.S. forces was required before "effort at settlement." (There is a clear conflict here between Ho's statements and R's.) R had not mentioned bombing -- as Ho most explicitly did in his interview -- or even a cease-fire. He may fear cease-fire effect on NLF just as we fear its effect on GVN legitimacy and control.

August 18, 1965 - Third meeting between X and R

1. This was the most positive meeting to date. R: (a) revealed fall-back position from the Ho interview, and (b) pin-pointed bombing as "tangible evidence" of acceptance in principle of the four points; (c) queried the meaning of X's four points, showing serious consideration thereof, and (d) stressed the desirability of a further meeting.

2. R did not reject the idea that a formula on South Vietnamese representation at the Conference table could be worked out if "other obstacles removed." R tried to get X to make another move on representation.

3. R said reunification could "wait some time." Like X, R insisted on the word "stages." On mechanisms for elections and supervision, R did not object to X's formulations.

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4. Bombing issue re-emerges as the key DRV objective.

5. R said that troop withdrawals should be "phased," but that the final settlement should see troop withdrawals completed. X indicated that troop withdrawals must be "balanced" as well. R did not deny DRV troop presence in the South. Contrary to Ho, R insisted that his statements on phasing and balancing of troop withdrawals was the accepted DRV position.

6. R asked for clarification in detail of X's four points:

a. He did not like the word "compliance" and preferred "execution" or "acceptance."

b. Did "quasi military" mean men or weapons, or both? X said it meant all persons with military functions and all support equipment related to the war effort.

c. R asked for the meaning of regrouping and redeployment. X responded that one word was more static than the other, but that the key element was separation of combatants at some stage.

d. R asked about the meaning of the phrase "foreign personnel." X said that meant all foreign personnel.

7. R referred to "separation of combatants." X noted that R's interest in this issue was very tricky and could lead to VC consolidation of territory in the South. R said that this issue was very complicated.

U.S. Talking Points -- Where we stand in the talks and where we go from here

1. Two positive signs -- withdrawal and reunification issue.

a. Hanoi through R is not insisting on prior withdrawal and even envisages DRV balanced and phased withdrawal.

b. Hanoi accepts X's reunification formulation and the idea of phasing.

2. Remaining issues in dispute:

a. DRV insistence on the four points.

b. Conditions for cessation of bombing.

c. NLF representation.

d. Terms of the cease-fire (but this issue is not an obstacle to the inception of the Conference).



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3. On X's point three, X should press the U.S. self-determination formula -- at least to some sort of verbal agreement.

4. On the bombing issue:

a. Hanoi is clear in its insistence on bombing cessation before the Conference can begin, and

b. We are clear that we will stop only if the DRV ceases infiltration and there is a sharp reduction in military activity in SVN.

5. On the NLF, we should:

a. Reject the Algerian analogy.

b. Say this is a matter for Saigon and the VC to decide.

c. Stick to the no-coalition-now formula, and

d. Make clear that other "groups" could attend the Conference and express their views.

6. On the issue of the full cease-fire, we should insist on the GVN right to operate throughout SVN.

7. In his next meeting with R, X should:

a. Concentrate on his formulation of the four points (which have gained legitimacy by the Rusk TV interview).

b. Ascertain what the DRV would give for cessation of U.S. bombing, and

c. Suggest a formula of reductions in incidents in SVN (like French/Algerian agreement) as a possible DRV response to a bombing cessation.

September 2, 1965 - Pham Van Dong Report at National Day Meeting, 31 August

"But no difficulty whatsoever could force our people to retreat, and no enemy whosoever could intimidate us. With seething hatred and undaunted determination, all our compatriots from north to south rose up like one man and waged a nationwide and all-sided patriotic war in accordance with the appeal by our party and President Ho Chi Minh: . . . We would rather sacrifice everything than lose our independence. We are determined not to be enslaved again. The hour of struggle for national salvation has struck.

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Let us make sacrifices till our last drop of blood in order to defend our country. In spite of hardships imposed by the war of resistance, with a spirit of determination to make sacrifices, our people will certainly win victory.

"Soon after the DRV's founding and even after the outbreak of the resistance war in South Vietnam, we entered into negotiations with the French colonialists on many occasions and concluded with them several agreements and a modus vivendi in an effort to preserve peace. But to the French colonialists the signing of agreements was only a move designed to gain time and to prepare military forces and make plans for further aggression. It was only when our victories had made it clear to them that they could never conquer Vietnam and subdue our people and that further military adventures would only result in still heavier defeats that peace could be restored on the basis of the recognition of our national rights: This is a clear lesson of history, a lesson on relations with the imperialists which our people will never forget."

. . . . .

"The NFLSV, now controlling more than four-fifths of South Vietnam's territory and over two-thirds of its population, is the only genuine representative of the people of South Vietnam. The front's international prestige and influence increase with every passing day. The front is now the real master of the situation in South Vietnam. It must have a decisive say in the settlement of the South Vietnam question. In the meantime, the Saigon quisling administration has unmasked itself more and more clearly as the U.S. imperialists' henchman, as traitor to its country. It is hated by the people and regarded by world opinion as a puppet unworthy of notice."

. . . . .

"....The U.S. aggressors think that by launching air raids against the north they can intimidate our people both in North and in South Vietnam and menace the peoples of the socialist countries and other parts of the world. In reply to this threat our people both in North and in South Vietnam, far from flinching, have dealt, are dealing, and will deal ever stronger blows at the U.S. aggressors and their agents...."

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"The socialist camp is more and more powerful; all socialist countries are extending wholehearted support and assistance to our people; close to us, like the lips and the teeth, are the staunch Chinese people; always side by side with us are the peoples of the mighty Soviet Union and the other fraternal socialist countries."

.....

"A few years ago the U.S. President and U.S. military and political circles often made arrogant statements. They said the Viet Cong must be wiped out, that they are resolved to pacify South Vietnam, and that the national liberation war in South Vietnam must be defeated to set a good example for the world. But now their tone has changed. In his speech on 28 July President Johnson even began to talk about his readiness to discuss Hanoi's proposals, to mention the question of reunifying Vietnam, and the NFLSV. Why is there such a change? Is that an indication of Washington's willingness for peace?

"Replying to this question, we must consider not the statements by the U.S. ruling circles, but their deeds. What have they done? They have been intensifying the aggressive war in South Vietnam and stepping up the escalation in the north. They have decided to dispatch all at once 50,000 more U.S. combat troops and still more in the future to South Vietnam and at the same time are making preparations in all fields for expansion of the war in this area.

"In a word, President Johnson talks about peace in an attempt to cover up his war schemes; the more he talks about peace the more he steps up the war...."

.....

"In order to expose the U.S. imperialists as aggressors and warmongers, we call on the world's people, including the American people, to further push forward the movement demanding that they stop the aggressive war in South Vietnam, put an end to the escalation in air attacks against North Vietnam, implement the Geneva agreements, accept the four-point stand of the DRV Government and the stand expounded in the 22 March 1965 statement of the NFLSV. Only in this way could there be a genuine and lasting peace in this area and could peace be safeguarded in other parts of the world."

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"....To put an end to the war in Vietnam and deter similar wars in other parts of the world, it is necessary to resolutely stay the hands of the U.S. aggressors and warmongers, the source of all types of unjust wars."

"....To bow down before the threats of the U.S. imperialists or to compromise with them would constitute an act of encouragement fraught with incalculably serious consequences.... That is why the entire world has unanimously and strongly protested against the U.S. escalation of the war to North Vietnam."

"....The purpose of the Vietnamese people's bold struggle has been fully embodied in the four-point stand of the DRV Government.

"This is the sole correct stand of peace which has been recognized by world public opinion as the only basis for a settlement of the Vietnam problem. This four-point stand fully conforms to the most important political and military provisions of the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam, and the whole world is now of the view that these agreements must be correctly implemented. This four-point stand must be solemnly accepted by the U.S. Government before a political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be contemplated."

.....

September 3, 1965 - Fourth meeting between X and R

1. R took a line similar to the Pham Van Dong speech. This was a retrogression from previous talks in two very important respects:

a. U.S. troops must leave before elections, and

b. U.S. intensification of bombings in the North and ground actions in the South in the last 15 days was viewed by the DRV as an attempt to force negotiations on the DRV. R said that the bombings must stop "unilaterally, immediately, totally, and definitively." Then, he said, there would be a "possibility for negotiations."

2. R, when pressed, did not deny that the 325th was in SVN, but claimed it was not now engaged in military operations.

3. X offered a formula of "parallel but ostensibly unlinked" actions to halt the bombings, possibly synchronized by the third party. X said that U.S. was showing restraint and has not hit a number of sensitive targets. R said that thousands in the North were being killed.

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4. R pulled back on "stages" approach to troop withdrawal.

5. X noted that talks with R had taken zig-zag course. R, obviously agitated, demanded confirmation from X that R had always taken a consistent line in these talks and had never deviated from the official DRV position. X did not comply with this request.

September 7, 1965 - Fifth meeting

R does not show up. DRV officials said that he was "sick."

Sum-up Memo:

Even though the talks dissipated in the last meeting, R showed interest in:

- a. X's own initiative on U.S. troop withdrawals before elections, and
- b. Possible Hanoi responses to a bombing cessation without stipulating DRV counterparts.

September 23, 1965 - DRV Foreign Ministry Memorandum

. . . . .

"The 'unconditional discussions' proposal of the U.S. authorities is but an attempt to compel the Vietnamese people to accept their own terms."

"These are: U.S. troops will not withdraw, but will cling on to South Vietnam; the United States always regards South Vietnam as a separate nation, that is to say, it wants the partition of Vietnam to be prolonged indefinitely; it does not recognize the NFLSV, the sole, genuine representative of the people of South Vietnam. As a matter of fact, its scheme is to try to achieve at the conference table what it has been unable to gain on the battlefield. The Vietnamese people will never accept such insolent conditions."

"The 'cease-fire' trick of the U.S. authorities is designed in fact to compel the Vietnamese people in both zones to lay down their arms while U.S. troops continue to be reinforced, to occupy and commit aggression against Vietnam. This is also an attempt to play for time to consolidate the puppet administration and army, to increase forces for further expansion of the war in Vietnam...."

"....Now they are saying that they 'will cease bombing the north' if there is some 'response' from Hanoi."

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"The DRV Government solemnly declares that the U.S. authorities must stop their criminal war acts against the DRV. They have no right to impose any condition on the DRV Government....

"....Yet the U.S. Government refuses to recognize it as the sole genuine representative of the people of South Vietnam. It has declared that it does not regard the front as an independent party in negotiations. This further exposes its talks about negotiations as a mere swindle. There cannot be any negotiations on the South Vietnam problem without the NFLSV having its decisive say."

. . . . .

"The DRV Government has on repeated occasions declared that internationally speaking the consideration of the U.S. Government's war acts against the DRV and the U.S. war of aggression in South Vietnam falls within the competence of the participants in the 1954 Geneva conference on Indochina, and not of the United Nations. Any U.N. resolution in furtherance of the above U.S. scheme will be null and void and will completely discredit the United Nations...."

. . . . .

"To settle the Vietnam problem it is essential to remove the roots of the serious situation in Vietnam--U.S. aggression. Any approach which puts the aggressor and the victim on the same footing or which does not proceed from the real situation in Vietnam will fail to bring about a settlement of the Vietnam problem."

"This stand also proceeds from the legitimate aspirations of the Vietnamese people in both zones, as embodied in the program of the Vietnam Fatherland Front and that of the NFLSV; namely, peace, independence, unity, and democracy."

"The Vietnamese people and the DRV Government earnestly call on the governments and peoples of the world to resolutely struggle and demand that the U.S. Government accept the four-point stand of the DRV Government. The U.S. Government must put an immediate end to the air war against the DRV and completely stop encroaching on the latter's sovereignty and security. It must immediately end the war of aggression in South Vietnam and withdraw all U.S. troops and weapons from there...."

"The four-point stand of the DRV Government is enjoying an ever-warmer sympathy and support from the peace-loving governments and peoples all over the world. It is the sole correct

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basis for a settlement of the Vietnam problem. Any solutions at variance with it are inappropriate and so are any solutions which seek U.N. intervention in the Vietnam situation, because such solutions are fundamentally contrary to the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam."

"The U.S. Government must solemnly declare its acceptance of this four-point stand before a political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be considered."

November 1, 1965 - X introduces Y by letter to R

Instructions for Y:

1. Stress building pressures in the U.S. for escalation -- not a threat but a fact.
2. Take an anti-Chinese tack.
3. Develop theme of Asian economic development and aid.
4. DRV Aide Memoire, September 23, 1965:
  - a. Asserts U.S. insists on keeping forces in SVN. With respect to this, pursue the idea of stages.
  - b. Asserts U.S. insists on separate Vietnams forever.
  - c. Seeming change on point three -- now NLF "must have decisive say."
  - d. What is meant by "solemnly declaring acceptance of four points -- stopping all action, withdrawal or agreement to withdraw, bombing cessation?"
  - e. Rules out any DRV response to a bombing cessation.

November 18, 1965 - First meeting of Y and R

1. R seemed puzzled Y had no new knowledge to convey.
2. UNR Deputy Hauret tells Wylie (Cultural Attache) that R may have something to communicate to the U.S.
3. On 29 December, R says (unconfirmed) that he would like to meet with Gleysteen, senior officer, Political Section.

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December 29, 1965 - Instructions for Y

1. Y should indicate to R knowledge of Deptel 202/Rangoon.
2. Y can indicate that possible DRV response to a bombing cessation would be "a clear major reduction in level of VC military activity and terrorism in SVN."

On January 1, 1966, Y tries to contact R and is told that R is sick.

January 3, 1966 - Meeting of Y and Jean (Vo Van Sung), second or third man in DRV delegation

1. Jean said that the DRV four points "must be basis of solution."
2. Jean accepted papers (Rangoon and French translation of X's four points), but had no message to transmit.

January 11, 1966 - R report encouraging intermediaries

1. Senator McGovern
2. Kingsbury-Smith
3. Sanford Gottleib

January 13, 1966 - Meeting of Y and Jean

Nothing transpires.



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January 27, 1966

- Bo Conversation with Left-of-Center French Journalist
- Statements by Bo on U.S. Peace Offensive (14 Points) (CSDB 312/00280-66)

"2. Asked to comment on the United States peace offensive with regard to Vietnam, Bo replied as follows:

"With their peace offensive the Americans tried to create a double illusion. First, the illusion that they had made concessions. In fact, their fourteen points show absolutely no change of position from before. Each principle they state is followed by a **condition** that makes the principle unworkable, i.e. that denies the principle. They say that they will withdraw from Vietnam 'as soon as the Vietnamese will be left to solve their problems alone.' In fact, the Vietnamese will be left to solve their problems alone precisely after the Americans have left. I could give you more examples of how each of their fourteen points is a statement of principle coupled with a condition that denies the principle.

"The second illusion created by their peace offensive is that they have 'accepted three of our four points,' as Dean Rusk said. But let us look at the remaining point, i.e., point number three. That point states that South Vietnam should apply the program of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSV). That program consists of independence, democracy, neutrality, peace, and peaceful reunion of the two Vietnams. In rejecting point number three, the Americans in fact reject the three points that they claim to accept. You see, one must look at the heart of the matter. The Americans have not budged an inch in their position. They are not willing to 'give' anything. They want to hang on to Vietnam. Their bombings have failed. Our Prime Minister said, 'Nobody, not even children are afraid of the bombings;' that is the heart of the matter, that is our victory. Of course, our roads, bridges, schools, and hospitals are sacred to us, dear to us. The Americans gambled on that; they thought that we would rather save them than fight. They failed. Their ground escalation and ground war have failed. We have downed 200 planes and killed 20,000 Americans. Our victories are tremendous. So, having failed to bring us to our knees by bombings and by ground war, they have tried to force our hand by putting pressure on world opinion in order

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to have others put pressure on us and lead us to the negotiation table--only to accept the American conditions. That was the meaning of the peace offensive. They wanted to bring many countries to force us to sit down and accept the American conditions. That was the 'content' of their sincerity. When we speak of sincerity we must define the word, find out what is the 'content' of American sincerity. They are sincere in wanting to stay in Vietnam and in wanting us to sit down and accept that as a fact. They are in an impasse and they are going to sink further and further into the impasse. We are prepared and we will wait for them to bomb Haiphong and Hanoi. The price for this will become higher and higher for them; they will have to pay more money and suffer more casualties. We are not going to be deterred by any type of escalation. Aside from that, while the 'peace offensive went on' the Americans continued to expand their military and logistic infrastructure, to prepare the way for a wider, bigger, wilder, longer war--not for a retreat.

"3. Asked about the bombing pause, Bo stated:

"The pause in bombing is not negotiable. The Americans unilaterally violate the territorial integrity of a nation and then stop and expect something in exchange for it? That is mad. We have always demanded that these bombings stop as a prerequisite of any negotiations but the stopping of bombing is not enough.

"4. Asked what he would consider as a gesture on the American side that would show willingness, i.e. 'sincerity with content,' to negotiate, Bo replied:

"There are several things that they could do: recognizing the Front as the sole representative of the South Vietnamese people is one; stopping the bombings in the North and aggression in the South are others.

"5. The interviewer pointed out that many discussions have taken place about whether North Vietnam wants the United States to withdraw its troops before any negotiations or whether American acceptance of the four points in principle, without withdrawal of its troops, would be sufficient for North Vietnam to negotiate. He asked what the true North Vietnamese position on this question was. Bo smiled, appearing slightly embarrassed, and replied:

"Each thing in its own good time. We are now faced with escalation, with more war. If the Americans ever decide to leave our country and by certain practical

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concrete gestures show to us that they mean it, then we can find ways and means for a settlement for their departure; then we can solve the problems that will arise. So why speculate? As for now, the Americans do not accept our four points and want to stay in Vietnam. If some day they accept our four points, then we can look for solutions to the problems that will arise on how to make their acceptance of the four points concrete.

(Source Comment: This was Bo's way of saying, or of hinting without stating, that the departure of United States troops was not a pre-condition to negotiations. I am categorical about that, i.e. that he tried to convey this impression.)

"6. Asked whether he did not think, as some do, that the Americans did not want peace but that they wanted to use the peace offensive to bring about an agreement with Hanoi so as not to escalate the war on either side, to maintain it within its present size or perhaps decrease it on both sides, Bo replied: 'C'est tire par les cheveux' (that is far-fetched). Bo repeated that the peace offensive was the result of American failure to bring the NFLSV or Hanoi to their knees and was but an attempt to bring them to their knees by diplomatic means, which were as heavy handed as their military ones.

"7. When asked if Aleksandr N. Shelepin's visit to North Vietnam had been useful, Bo smiled broadly and said, 'Very!' This contrasted with Bo's comments on Chinese and Soviet help made at a previous interview on 30 September 1965 when he was restrained and polite in saying that these countries had helped North Vietnam. This time, at mention of Shelepin, Bo smiled broadly and was very dramatic although maintaining his traditional coolness of manners. Bo said, 'The Soviets are giving us substantially increased material and military aid.' Asked if the North Vietnamese were satisfied with Russian aid, Bo said "very satisfied" and added, 'Shelepin's trip was but the symbol of the increase of Russian aid to us.' The interviewer noted that the Russian communique and the North Vietnamese communique issued in Hanoi were slightly different and asked if this did not mean that Shelepin had pressured the Vietnamese to be more moderate and had indirectly worked for the Americans. Bo smiled and answered, 'I can only repeat to you that officially and privately, in name and in fact, the Russians approve of our struggle, back it, and are increasingly with us.'

"8. When asked if his statements meant that North Vietnam had missiles capable of destroying Saigon in reprisal if Hanoi were bombed, Bo smiled--it seemed a secret, happy smile--and said, 'I cannot go into such details for obvious reasons, but, yes, the Russians have significantly contributed to our defenses.'

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"9. When asked why Soviet missiles did not shoot down as many American planes as expected, Bo said this was because the missiles were manned by North Vietnamese. If the North Vietnamese had asked the Soviets to man them, Bo said, they would have had to ask for Chinese Communist personnel as well, and the North Vietnamese thought they could handle things by themselves. Bo said that now the North Vietnamese were getting more experience and training.

"10. Bo would not answer a question as to the presence of Soviet military personnel in North Vietnam.

"11. To a question as to whether Nguyen Van Chi represented the NFLSV in France, Bo responded rather contemptuously that Chi was 'just a Vietnamese gentleman who lives in France' and represented nobody.

"12. When it was suggested to Bo, to provoke a reaction, that manifestations of dissent in the United States by students and others would not persuade President Johnson to stop the war, but would only serve to provoke indignation and raise prospects of a new 'McCarthyism' and even fascism in America, Bo showed skepticism. He said that he did not have a simplistic view of the United States, and that it was true that progressive action normally brought about reaction, as in France in 1956, but that he did not believe that this would lead to fascism in the United States, where the Government, after all, was obliged to take public opinion into account. Bo spoke at length on the reasons he did not think that public opinion would harden in the United States. While he agreed to a point with statements that there were no proletarians in the United States and that most of the people were bourgeois and prosperous and therefore backed the Government to defend their advantages, he seemed profoundly convinced that public opinion in the United States is reacting more and more against the war in Vietnam and that the high cost of the war and loss of American lives will eventually lead the United States to want to get out of Vietnam. Bo quoted television commentator David Schoenbrun, a French general, and others to back up his case. He presented a long argument about the Americans and the atomic bomb, which he said could kill a lot of people and was not something to be despised and ignored, but he said what ultimately counted was man--man's brain. The Americans, Bo said, rely only on machines, and that is their weakness; Europe has a solid cultural infrastructure--thousands of years of history--the Americans do not. Bo said the Americans were not like other people, and that their blind faith in machinery and mechanical devices would be their doom. He said the atomic bomb was "not the end of the world," and that the human factor was more important. He said that the whole world hated the Americans; they were the most hated people in history.

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"13. To a question as to whether Hanoi had pulled some troops back as a result of the American peace offensive, Bo said there were no northern troops in South Vietnam--at least not regular troops. He said that North Vietnam was backing the NFLSV morally and materially and that North Vietnamese volunteers might have joined the NFLSV but that they were fighting on their own."

May 6, 1966 - Bo meeting with Adalbert de Segonzac of France Soir

Bo told Segonzac that "the essential thing is to find out whether or not the Americans are willing to leave." Bo related that the internal situation in North Vietnam had improved greatly over what it was in the first months of the U.S. bombings. In fact, he said: "The country is much better off now than it was before the bombings because it is receiving from the communist countries a flood of foodstuffs and other useful products in much greater quantities than in the past."

Bo gave Segonzac the impression of being intransigent on the question of NLF representation at a conference. To Bo, the Front "is the only valid negotiator." Bo did say, however, that certain groups that are not dominated by the U.S. can also have their say, for example, "the Buddhists are patriots."

Bo showed skepticism about the possibility of holding free elections. "How can elections be held in a country over which no authority is exercised?" Bo did not condemn the principle of elections.

Bo freely admitted that Hanoi was helping the VC, but maintained that the VC were acting independently of Hanoi.

Bo gave the following schedule of particulars of Hanoi's version of a plan for the departure of U.S. forces:

"It contemplates three stages -- in the first stage, the U.S. would agree on the principle of their departure before the South Vietnamese settled by themselves their problems, which cannot be resolved so long as a foreign army is on their national territory. The second stage is that of negotiation. The third stage is departure."

PINTA-RANGOON

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PINTA: THE RANGOON CONTACT

SUMMARY and ANALYSIS

This paper is in three parts: (1) A discussion of the main questions raised by the episode. (2) A brief description of the principal events in Rangoon. (3) A more detailed chronology based on cables, memoranda, etc. Parts 1 and 2 are based on the sources cited in Part 3.

1. Discussion

The U.S. entered the 37-day bombing pause on December 24, 1965, with few illusions that the communists would respond readily by entering negotiations. On December 10, Radio Hanoi denounced the May 1965 pause as "shameful trickery" amounting to "an ultimatum." It noted indications that another halt was in the offing and announced that the U.S. should "harbor no hope that the Vietnamese people would be taken in...." It demanded U.S. recognition of the DRV's 4 Points, a "definite" halt to the bombing and the "war of aggression" in SVN, etc. On December 16, Soviet Embassy Counsellor Zinchuk indicated to Bundy that Hanoi would almost certainly not respond at that time, though a pause could improve the atmosphere for the long run.

In spite of this, the U.S. made a maximum effort to draw the DRV into contact during the pause. A modicum of success was attained in Rangoon, where the DRV Consul General agreed to receive the U.S. Ambassador on December 29 and accept his Aide Memoire.

Timing: Contact While Bombing? No formal DRV reply was received until the evening of January 31, over 12 hours after the bombing had been resumed. The circumstances left unclear whether this timing was coincidental or a delay intended to avoid the appearance that the DRV agreed to the contact out of fear of the bombing. The ambiguity was so well contrived as to suggest that it was intentional. It did not provide a basis for claiming either that the DRV had gone back on its pledge never to talk while being bombed, or that the enticements of a pause in the bombing were sufficient to induce the DRV to enter contact.

A Stab at "Unconditional Discussions"? The DRV response turned out to be a rebuttal of the U.S. 14 Points. It objected particularly to U.S. troop withdrawal being offered on the condition, it claimed, that the NLF lay down its arms and accept amnesty. This meant keeping the "puppet government" and not recognizing the NLF as the sole genuine representative of the SVN people or negotiating with it. U.S. acceptance of the DRV 4 Points was again demanded. At the end, the DRV representative offered to listen to what the U.S. Ambassador "may wish to expound on the US position."

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Perhaps this rather stilted beginning was intended as a small move toward unconditional discussions, since the DRV had taken some account of our 14 Points, presented its rebuttal and offered to hear our reply. The substance of the matter was not pursued, however. Instead our representative turned to arrangements, objecting to DRV contentions that its 4 Points should be the exclusive basis for exchanges and asking if "responsible emissaries of our two Governments could meet and talk about all of these things (the 4 Points and our 14 Points) together." This more formal arrangement was firmly rejected.

On February 1, Hanoi published a lengthy article containing essentially the same arguments as the confidential Aide Memoire. One new point was injected: Raising doubt about U.S. acceptance of neutrality for SE Asia, the article asks "is it not plain enough that... (the Americans) oppose the holding of an international conference guaranteeing the neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia?" In fact, the U.S. had earlier urged such a conference in the hopes that Vietnam might be discussed by the way. Was this an involuted DRV probe of U.S. interest in resurrecting the Cambodian conference idea? It seems unnecessarily oblique, and the notion was not tested at the time.

The Channel Stays Open. The Rangoon channel was still open on February 3, when the U.S. delivered a note assuring the DRV that its Aide Memoire was under study.

Opposing Settlement Proposals. The substantive U.S. reply was delivered on February 19 in an Aide Memoire urging that the political future of SVN be settled through truly free elections, without any outside interference. The U.S. would accept the results of such an election, though it would not agree to put the NLF into a coalition government or take it as the sole representative of SVN without an election. U.S. forces would withdraw when peace was restored. The specific proposals passed to the DRV during the XYZ exchanges were offered again.

The issues separating the two sides are fairly clear. The communists demanded assurance of a major role for the NLF as the price for ending the war; and they feared that no such assurance would be valid while U.S. troops remained in Vietnam. The U.S. was unwilling to see such a role for the NLF imposed by force of arms; it wanted the war ended first. It would withdraw its troops only as the DRV withdrew and the NLF gave up the use of force as a means to political power. This would mean accepting the GVN, with such alterations as could be negotiated, as the legitimate government of SVN. In short, the communists were not willing to contend for power peacefully under GVN auspices, whereas we insisted they do so.

The Channel Closes. After accepting the Aide Memoire for transmittal to Hanoi, the DRV representative assailed as acts of war the bombing resumption and the USG/GVN Declaration of Honolulu. Acting under instructions, he then declined to continue the contact, citing the bombing resumption as the reason. Given his willingness to accept a U.S. message on February 3, however, and in view of the DRV's great emphasis on a role



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for the NLF and its rejection of the GVN, it seems possible that the Honolulu Declaration was as much responsible. Contrary to repeated communist demands, the Declaration must have read to them as a reaffirmation of U.S. recognition of the GVN as the "sole genuine representative of the SVN people."

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2. Principal Events in the Rangoon Contact

December 29, 1965. Byroade hands the DRV Consul General, Vu, an Aide-Memoire calling attention to the bombing suspension begun December 24, and expressing the hope that DRV reciprocity would permit it to be extended.

January 4, 1966. The DRV Foreign Ministry issues a blast at "so-called peace efforts" of the US. The statement does not explicitly acknowledge that the bombing has stopped. It objects to numerous other US activities. Its main point is that "a political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be envisaged only when the USG has accepted the 4-Point stand of the DRV, has proved this by actual deeds, has stopped unconditionally and for good its air raids and all other acts of war against the DRV."

January 21, 1966. Byroade calls on Vu to remind him we await a reply to our Aide-Memoire. Vu says he has no instructions yet, but offers his "personal" view that the Aide-Memoire amounted to an ultimatum. He uses the occasion to protest press reports from the White House hinting at their direct contact.

January 24, 1966. Vu sends Byroade a hand-carried Aide-Memoire dated January 21, and repeating, virtually verbatim, Vu's oral remarks of that date.

January 27, 1966. Byroade responds to Vu's January 24 Aide-Memoire with a memo inquiring about a response to his December 29 Aide-Memoire.

January 31, 1966. Some hours (at least 6) after the resumption of air strikes against the DRV, Vu asks Byroade to call. When they meet (more than 12 hours after the resumption), Vu delivers an Aide-Memoire referring to the DRV Foreign Ministry statement of January 4 and adding specific rebuttals of the US 14 Points: (a) the 14 Points and subsequent US statements constitute a refusal to recognize the principles of the 1954 Geneva Accords; (b) the US offers to withdraw its troops from SVN only on its own terms, which means that it really refuses to withdraw them; (c) the US statement that it seeks no military bases in SE Asia is inconsistent with its reiterated commitment to SEATO; and (d) the US demands that the NLF lay down its arms and accept amnesty as a condition for self-determination of the SVN people, which means the US intends to keep the "puppet regime" in power, does not recognize the NLF as the sole genuine representative of the entire SVN people, and will not negotiate with the NLF -- the US rejects Point 3, which amounts to rejecting all 4 Points.

The Aide-Memoire concludes by expressing Vu's willingness to listen to what Byroade "may wish to expound on the US position." Byroade

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replies by objecting to the 4 Points as an exclusive basis for US/DRV exchanges and asks if "responsible emissaries of our two Governments could meet and talk about all of these things (the 4 Points and our 14 Points) together." Vu says there is no possibility of negotiations unless we accept their 4 Points. However, he also offers to communicate to Hanoi whatever Byroade has to say at any time, and shows Byroade out by a back gate which is indicated as better to use from a security point of view.

February 1, 1966. Hanoi's English service broadcasts a lengthy article from the Vietnam Courier (published only in French and English), listing the US 14 Points and rebutting them with essentially the same arguments used in Vu's January 31 Aide-Memoire. In elaborating on objections to SEATO, it calls the US a "sworn enemy of neutral countries" asking in substantiation "is it not plain enough that...(the Americans) oppose the holding of an international conference guaranteeing the neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia?"

February 3, 1966. Byroade delivers a brief memo saying Vu's January 31 Aide-Memoire is under study in Washington. The purpose is to see if Hanoi is willing to maintain the contact, in spite of the bombing resumption.

Meanwhile Bundy, in Washington, concludes that "there appears to be a substantial possibility...that Hanoi even waited till it knew of the resumption before it dispatched (Vu's) instructions...Hanoi may have been unwilling to open any dialogue during the suspension, lest this appear as a sign of weakness." He notes that Hanoi had enough time to call Vu off by a commercial cable simply saying not to carry out prior instructions.

February 16, 1966. State sends Byroade an Aide-Memoire to be handed Vu, without the appearance of urgency. It responds to Vu's January 31 Aide-Memoire, as follows: (a) The US believes the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Accords are an adequate basis for peace in SE Asia. (b) The US is willing to withdraw its troops from SVN when peace is restored. It does not demand to be the sole judge of this condition. DRV violation of the regroupment provisions of the 1954 Accords has made US actions necessary. US withdrawal under international verification would be undertaken in the light of DRV actions in this regard. (c) The US desires neither military bases nor forces in SVN. (d) The DRV's Point 3 would be acceptable if it means only seeking "to achieve independence, democracy, peace and neutrality in SVN and to advance toward peaceful reunification," as paraphrased January 29 by Ho. It would not be acceptable if it meant putting the NLF in a coalition government or accepting the NLF as "sole genuine representative" of the SVN people, prior to and without regard to an election. The political future of SVN should be settled through truly free elections. The US is categorically prepared to accept the results.

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This statement of the US position is accompanied by a settlement proposal similar to that handed Mai Van Bo in XYZ (q.v.) Byroade is instructed not to amplify on the text, but to note Vu's comments.

February 19, 1966. Byroade delivers the text to Vu, who listens to his interpreter's reading of it, promises to transmit it to Hanoi, but does not comment on its contents. Vu then assails as acts of war the bombing resumption and the USG/GVN Declaration of Honolulu. Noting that he is acting under instructions, Vu says, "Since the US has resumed the bombing, I hold that it is inappropriate to continue our talks at your request."

February 21, 1966. Vu's oral remarks of February 19 are confirmed and elaborated in an Aide-Memoire dated February 19 but hand-carried to Byroade on February 21.

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3. Chronology

December 10, 1965

U.S. PAUSE IN BOMBING OF DRV DECEIVES NO ONE

Hanoi VNA International Service in English 1706 GMT 10 December 1965--B

. . .in an attempt to hoodwink public opinion in the United States and the world and cover up their frenzied efforts to expand and escalate the war in both zones of Vietnam. U.S. President Johnson, State Secretary Dean Rusk and the U.S. delegate to the United Nations, Ambassador Goldberg have once again played their record of unconditional discussions. Worthy of note was that U.S. State Secretary Dean Rusk has been claiming noisily about a so-called second pause in the bombing raids in North Vietnam. At a press conference in the White House on 1 December 1965 he said, I am not now excluding a stop in the bombing as a step toward peace. He also recalled the so-called first pause in May this year and slanderously accused the DRV with not responding to this gesture of the United States. He even threatened that if North Vietnam did not respond the peaceful settlement of the Vietnam question would be delayed.

This trick of the U.S. state secretary is not novelty. It must be recalled that in May this year, Dean Rusk in the name of his government, already sent a message to a number of countries announcing a halt in the bombing of the DRV by U.S. aircraft for a week beginning on 12 May. Making black white, the message slanderously charged North Vietnam with aggression against South Vietnam and threatened that if the South Vietnamese people did not stop their self-deliberation fight, the United States would continue to bomb the north.

In its essence, the message was an ultimatum to the Vietnamese people, urging the South Vietnamese to abandon their patriotic struggle as a condition for a halt in the bombing of the DRV. The message itself has revealed that the unconditional discussion offer of Johnson is only a bid to make the Vietnamese people lay down arms and submit to their brute force of aggression.

This shameful trickery has failed miserably. Now the U.S. imperialists are having another try at it. . . .

. . . .

It also must be pointed out that the U.S. imperialists' deeds never match with their words. In the period of the so-called suspension of the bombings over North Vietnam, from 12 to 17 May this year, U.S. aircraft and warships continued to encroach upon the airspace and territorial waters of the DRV for spying, provocative, and raiding activities. Two U.S. F-105 jetfighters were downed over Nghe on 13 and 17 May, respectively. Meanwhile, the United States brought to South Vietnam (?over 1,400) more combat troops

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and the U.S.-puppets intensified both their ground and air raids against the population. On 14 May alone, U.S.-puppet aircraft flew 186 sorties.

. . . .

. . . . L. Johnson himself did not hide the true intention of the United States when he declared at his ranch in Texas on 6 December: We will send as many men as necessary to Vietnam. Is it not sufficiently clear that the new decision to halt the bombing in North Vietnam is only a maneuver to prepare for further expansion of the war by the U.S. imperialists?

Let the U.S. imperialists harbor no hope that the Vietnamese people would be taken in by such a shopworn trick of theirs. The United States must declare its recognition of the four-point stand of the DRV and prove it by concrete acts. Concretely speaking they must stop definitely all bombing raids against the DRV, stop their war of aggression against South Vietnam, withdraw all US troops from South Vietnam and let the Vietnamese people decide themselves their own affairs. Only then can there be genuine peace in Vietnam. As pointed out by President Ho Chi Minh in his reply to questions by Uruguayan journalist Salomon Schvarz Alexandroaith, editor in chief of EL POPULAR, organ of the Uruguayan Communist Party, this stand is the only correct basis for a solution to the Vietnam problem since it conforms with the Geneva agreements, with the practical situation in Vietnam and with the national rights of the Vietnamese people.

December 17, 1965

NOTE TO THE SECRETARY:

(TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY)

Subject: Last Thoughts on the Pause Proposal

1. My recommendation would continue to be affirmative, but only if we give ourselves time for real understanding with the GVN, and we were determined to continue it at least for two weeks, not jumping back in at the first predictable counter-blast from Hanoi.

2. I lunched with Zinchuk of the Soviet Embassy yesterday and, for what it is worth, he seemed to be saying that Hanoi almost certainly would not respond this time, but that it would greatly improve the atmosphere for the long run. I got the impression that the Soviets have had recent talks in Hanoi, in which Hanoi has taken pretty much the line reflected in its propaganda broadcasts of December 10 and 11, virtually denouncing a second pause in advance unless we also do something major with respect to the South--which I take to imply the suspension of reinforcements. This I most emphatically do not feel we should do.

. . . .

William P. Bundy

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December 29, 1965

STATE 202 (to Amembassy RANGOON), S/Nodis, Flash, Sent 29 December 1965

EYES ONLY FOR AMBASSADOR FROM SECRETARY

1. President has decided that he wishes defer resumption of bombing for several more days. We are most anxious that word of this action be conveyed directly to DRV, although we are also naturally conveying message to key Communist governments that in touch with Hanoi.

2. Accordingly, you should convey aide memoire in text given below in some manner to DRV Ambassador Rangoon. ...

3. Text of aide memoire is as follows:

BEGIN TEXT:

"1. As you are no doubt aware, there has been no bombing in North Viet-Nam since December 24 although some reconnaissance flights have continued. No decision has been made regarding a resumption of bombings and unless there is a major provocation we would hope that the present stand-down, which is in its fifth day, could extend beyond New Year. If your government will now reciprocate by making a serious contribution toward peace, it would obviously have a favorable effect on the possibility of further extending the suspension.

"2. I and other members of my Embassy staff stand available at any time to receive any communication you may wish to address to me or to us."  
END TEXT.

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

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RANGOON 315 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Immediate, sent 29 Dec 65; Rec'd 0715, 29 Dec 65

EYES ONLY FOR THE SECRETARY

REF: DEPTTEL 202; EMBTEL 311

I called upon DRV Consul General at 3 P.M. today. ...

Vu Huu Binh ... received me with slight smile and ready handshake. I told him I was grateful for opportunity to see him personally as my government wished me to convey message directly to him for transmittal

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to his government. I then handed him the aide memoire. He and his interpreter studied document together with interpreter translating parts thereof into Vietnamese.

After studying document Vu Huu Binh said he would transmit it to his government. . . . I thanked him and told him I planned to keep my visit to him and the subject thereof quite confidential I had come in official U.S. Embassy car but not my own because it was conspicuous. He said that on his part he would also keep matter confidential.

I . . . . would be available in Rangoon anytime of day or night if he should wish to see me. . . .

. . . .  
. . . .

BYROADE

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RANGOON 316 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Immediate, Sent 29 Dec 65;  
Rec'd 1334, 29 Dec 65

Eyes Only for the Secretary

Ref: DepTel 202

In an unprecedented evening meeting in the Foreign Office I saw U Thi Han and U Soe Tin together there tonight. . . .

I filled them in on the day's developments, going into substance along lines Deptel 201 only slightly and they did not ask substantive questions. They were obviously delighted that present effort was being made, and that direct contact had been made in Rangoon, and that I had sought to inform them promptly.

U Soe Tin asked if I expected a direct reply. I said I had had personal experience with Far East Communists only of the Chinese variety but, based upon that, I doubted, though I hoped to contrary, that a direct reply would come. He said he thought this correct and that, if Hanoi did in fact decide upon affirmative response, it would be in actions and not in form of reply to us.

. . . .  
. . . .

BYROADE

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January 4, 1966

(Hanoi VNA International Service in English 1749Z 4 Jan 66)

"Statement by Spokesman of DRV Foreign Ministry on So-Called Peace Efforts  
Made Recently by the United States"

Text

Hanoi, 4 January--Follows the full text of the statement issued today by the spokesman of the DRV Foreign Ministry regarding the so-called peace efforts made recently by the United States:

Recently, the U.S. Government has started a large-scale deceptive peace campaign coupled with the trick of temporary suspension of air attacks on North Vietnam as a sign of good will. U.S. President Johnson has repeatedly stated that the United States is determined to exhaust every prospect for peace, and will search relentlessly for peace. The U.S. Government has sent envoys to approach foreign countries, and has put forward new peace proposals which are actually a mere repetition of old themes.

The fact is that in spite of repeated military and political defeats, the U.S. policy of aggression in Vietnam has remained unchanged. The United States has impudently sabotaged the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam which it had undertaken to respect. It still states shamelessly that it will keep its commitments with the puppet regime rigged up by itself in Saigon, and this with a view to clinging to South Vietnam and perpetuating the partition of Vietnam. It still refuses to recognize the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, the sole genuine representative of the people of South Vietnam, and the leader of their struggle against the U.S. imperialists' war of aggression. The United States still refuses to allow the people of South Vietnam to settle by themselves their own affairs in accordance with the program of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation.

Moreover, it is frantically using U.S. and puppet troops to burn down or destroy villages and crops, and massacre the people in South Vietnam and even arrogantly demanding that the people of South Vietnam lay down their arms and accept the rotten Saigon puppet regime. The United States still brazenly gives itself the right to launch air attacks on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, an independent and sovereign country. It talks about respecting the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam, yet it refuses to accept the four-point stand of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which is a concentrated expression of the essential military and political provisions of the said agreements. It is harping on the same string about unconditional discussions whose real purpose it is to carry out the plot of conducting negotiations from the position of strength, and attempting to force on the Vietnamese people acceptance of U.S. terms.

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The U.S. authorities' talks about peace are in complete contradiction with their war schemes and acts. While making a noise about its peace efforts, the United States is making feverish preparations to double the U.S. military strength in South Vietnam. The third brigade of the U.S. 25th Division has just been brought in for an occupation of Pleiku. The United States has kept on using toxic chemicals as a means of warfare and has made public announcements to this effect. Its B-52 strategic planes continue to bomb densely populated areas. In North Vietnam, the United States has threatened to bomb the densely populated industrial areas of Hanoi and Haiphong. U.S. President Johnson has also threatened to take hard steps in Vietnam. Meanwhile, the United States has intensified its air attacks on the liberated areas in Laos and impudently authorized U.S. troops to intrude into central and southern Laos and into Cambodian territory, thus extending the war from South Vietnam to these two countries.

The facts have shown that every time the U.S. authorities want to intensify their aggressive war, they talk still more glibly about peace. The present U.S. peace efforts are also a mere attempt to appease public opinion at home and abroad, which is strongly opposing the U.S. policy of aggression in Vietnam. The United States wants to turn to account the world people's legitimate aspirations for peace in an attempt to call black white, to pose as a peace-lover, to slander the Vietnamese people, and thus to create a pretext for making new steps in implementation of its scheme to intensify and expand the war. But no matter what sophisms the U.S. authorities may resort to in their attempt to cover up their aggressive schemes, they can fool no one.

The United States is thousands of miles away from Vietnam. The Vietnamese people has never laid hands on the United States. The U.S. Government has no right to send troops to invade South Vietnam and to launch air arracks on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam any condition whatsoever in exchange for stopping its air raids on North Vietnam.

U.S. imperialist aggression is the deep root and the immediate cause of the serious situation now prevailing in Vietnam. With the ending of this aggression peace will be immediately restored in this country.

The Vietnamese people eagerly want peace for national construction, but they know full well that real independence must be achieved if genuine peace is to be secured. It is the unswerving stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to strictly respect the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam and to correctly implement their basic provisions as concretely expressed in the following points:

One--Reaffirmation of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people: peace, independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity. In accordance with the Geneva Agreements, the U.S.

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Government must withdraw all U.S. troops, military personnel, and weapons of all kinds from South Vietnam, dismantle all U.S. military bases there, cancel its military alliance with South Vietnam. The U.S. Government must end its policy of intervention and aggression in South Vietnam. In accordance with the Geneva Agreements, the U.S. Government must stop its act of war against North Vietnam, cease all encroachments on the territory and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Two--Pending the peaceful reunification of Vietnam, while Vietnam is still temporarily divided into two zones, the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam must be strictly respected: The two zones must refrain from joining any military alliance with foreign countries, and there must be no foreign military base, troops, and military personnel on their respective territory.

Three--The internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the people of South Vietnam themselves, in accordance with the program of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation without any foreign interference.

Four--The peaceful reunification of Vietnam is to be settled by the Vietnamese people in both zones, without any foreign interference.

A political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be envisaged only when the U.S. Government has accepted the four-point stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, has proved this by actual deeds, has stopped unconditionally and for good its air raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The just struggle and the unswerving good will of the Vietnamese people and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam have always enjoyed the sympathy and vigorous support of the peace-loving governments and people the world over. The Vietnamese people are very grateful for this sympathy and support. The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam calls on the governments and peoples of the Socialist countries, those of the Asian, African, and Latin American countries, and the peoples of the whole world, including the American people, to extend still more active support and assistance to the Vietnamese peoples' just patriotic struggle, and to oppose still more resolutely and vigorously all the U.S. imperialists' plans for intensified war as well as all their peace swindles.

So long as the U.S. imperialists still pursue the war of aggression against Vietnam, still use U.S. and satellite troops to invade South Vietnam, and launch air attacks on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the people in both zones of Vietnam, fearing no sacrifices, will resolutely carry the resistance war through to the end and fulfill their sacred duty of defending the sovereignty of the fatherland and the independence of the nation and contributing to the defense of world peace.

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January 5, 1966

RANGOON 327 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Priority , Sent 5 Jan 66; Rec'd 2:27 A.M.,  
5 Jan 66 (Passed to White House 5 Jan 66, 4:15 A.M.)

Eyes Only for the Secretary

1. . . .When I saw U Thi Han and Soe Tin as reported EmbTel 316 I asked them how fast they believed North Vietnamese communications were. (I was interested in whether Vu HUU Binh might have been able get Hanoi's authority to receive me.) Soe Tin said they would be quite slow unless they used Chinese facilities.

2. Last night Soe Tin told me Vu HUU Binh had transmitted my message to Hanoi. He said Vu had sent two other messages to Hanoi direct by commercial cable a few hours after I saw him. I find this interesting and encouraging, in that this would appear to indicate Vu communicated with Hanoi without informing Chinese Embassy here.

. . . .  
. . . .

BYROADE

January 6, 1966

RANGOON 329 (to SecState), S/NODIS, Priority , Sent 6 Jan 66;  
Rec'd 6:45 A.M., 6 Jan 66 (Passed to White House 6 Jan 66)

Eyes Only for the Secretary

Yugoslav Ambassador Drndic called on me at his request today and further reinforced my belief we are still in clear as far as secrecy of Rangoon operation is concerned.

. . . .  
. . . .  
. . . .

. . . .He said, "I talked with Vu HUU Binh recently and he said he was confused because of non-receipt of instructions from Hanoi. Vu said that he had received guidance on the party line quickly during the last bombing pause, but that this time he hadn't had a word from Hanoi." . . . .

. . . .

BYROADE

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RANGOON 336 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Priority , Rec'd 8:53 P.M.,  
Jan 11, 1966 (passed White House 11 Jan 66, 10 P.M.)

Eyes Only for the Secretary

. . . .

. . . .

Tonight at a diplomatic function the French Ambassador . . .

...said that the story was being circulated that I had seen  
the North Vietnamese Rep here and had given him a communication  
explaining the pause in bombing. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

...I believe that this information in the hands of a not very  
friendly French Ambassador, plus the fact that the White House has  
announced a direct contact, will result in such speculation as to  
possibly preclude the use of Rangoon as a secret contact post in  
the future. . . .

BYROADE

January 20, 1966

STATE 227 (to Amembassy RANGOON), S/Nodis, Immediate, Sent 20 Jan 66

1. As part of our effort to close all circuits, you should seek  
appointment with DRV Consul General, saying simply that you are doing  
so under instructions.

2. Assuming he accepts, you should remind him that when you  
delivered our message on December 29 you indicated that you would be  
available for any response DRV might wish to make through this channel.  
Since that time, USG has received no indication of any Hanoi response  
either related to military action or obstacles to negotiation. Does  
DRV rep have any message to convey?

3. We suspect he will be without instructions and will simply  
undertake to report your call. However, if he should respond at all  
on your reference to military activity, you should indicate that VC  
activity in the South appears to have remained at a high level, and  
we have had reliable evidence of major truck movements continuing  
through Laos to South Vietnam. In circumstances, we have no alternative  
but to assume that DRV is continuing to send regular units to the South  
and to support high level of military activity there.

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4. If he should turn conversation in direction of conditions for negotiation, you should say that our position has been made clear many times and recently summarized in fourteen points and also in Goldberg letter to UN. We have had no indication of Hanoi's views on these documents, or on possibility of negotiation either without conditions or on basis of Geneva Accords.

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

January 21, 1966

RANGOON 365 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Immediate , Sent Jan 21;  
Rec'd Jan 21, 1966, 12:46 PM. (Passed White House Jan 21, 66)

Eyes Only for the Secretary

1. Called upon DRV Consul General Vu at his residence at 8:00 P.M. tonight. . . .

2. Vu did not wait for any introductory remarks on my part but remarked as soon as we were seated that I had delivered an aide memoire to him recently which I had said I would keep confidential. He said he had transmitted document to his government as he had promised. He wanted me to know however that in his own personal opinion the tone and contents of the aide memoire were such that he considered it an ultimatum.

. . . . .

4. I reminded him that when I last saw him I had said I would stand by for a reply from him. So far none had been received and there was no indication of any response either related to military action or to obstacles to negotiation. I asked if he had any reply for me. He said he had had no instructions from his government to reply. He said that in the meantime his government had issued public statements which indicated its position.

. . . . .

. . . . .

7. Vu said he had read press reports from the White House which hinted at our direct contact. I said I was aware of this statement but Rangoon had not been singled out. He said "such news should not have been disclosed, if you sincerely wish to exchange views." I said I understood and would do all I could to preserve secrecy our contacts.

. . . . .

9.

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9. I made remark that I hoped I received a telephone call some day from him and was preparing to depart when he said he was ready to listen if I had anything more to say. I said I had no instructions to say more but would make one more comment. I said from Washington viewpoint it was obvious that VC initiated military activity in South Vietnam had remained at a high level. We also had reliable evidence of major truck movements continuing to South Vietnam through Laos. It seemed we had no alternative but to assume that DRV was continuing to support large scale military effort in South and send regular units there.

10. Vu said that we were now speaking informally he would comment. He said that immediately after the US made its 14 points public, 4000 US soldiers had landed in South Vietnam. He also mentioned the figure of 9000 more arrivals (but I never got period of time to which he referred). He said there are reports that 20,000 more South Koreans may come. This was ample proof that our President was not sincere.

11. I said we both had had military experience, and therefore we both knew the advance planning that had to go into major movements of military units. . . .

12. . . . Vu said out 14 points contained nothing really new. I said I hoped he would find it a useful summary of our views for study.

13. . . .

BYROADE

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STATE 230 (to Amembassy RANGOON), S/NODIS, Immediate, Urtel 366,  
Sent 21 January 67

1. Text of U Thant's press conference Jan 20 on point you raise reads as follows:

"QUESTION: Last week when the US note was passed to the Hanoi Government in Burma, were you personally instrumental in this?"

"ANSWER: No, I was not instrumental in such a reported transaction; but of course the US very kindly kept me informed of the steps it proposed to take."

2. While you are right in assuming Thant tends by inference to substantiate reporter's assumption that contact took place in Burma, this point was not pursued in his press conference, nor was it raised with Secretary in his press conference this morning.



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3. If we are asked, we will continue for time being to take line that US is not prepared to comment on any specific channels of communications and suggest you do same.

4. Basis of question was probably earlier New York Times story about Monday which had mentioned Burma as place of US/DRV contact. Rangoon had also been mentioned in other press reports as possible point of contact. However, Times and other references were in low key and, thus far, neither they nor U Thant remark have attracted particular press attention.

RUSK (Drafted by W. B. Buffum, P. H. Kreisberg; Approved by W.P. Bundy and Walsh)

January 24, 1966

RANGOON 370 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Immediate, Rec'd 7:36 A.M.  
(passed to White House 9 A.M.)

Have just received an Aide-memoire addressed to me signed by DRV Rep Vu Huu Bing. Aide memoire is confusing in that it is dated January 21. Which is the date of my second meeting with him. Text follows:

Quote :At the last meeting, you handed to me an Aide-memoire which sounds in my personal views like an ultimatum. At your request, I have, however, transmitted it to my government and kept the contact in secret.

With regard to your Aide-memoire, I have no instruction from my government to give you an answer. Still I hope you have read the statements issued recently by my government.

Lately, the press has reported news quoting White House sources which hinted the contact between you and me.

Also personally, I have some other remarks to make: Immediately after the announcement of the 14 points by the United States, some 4,000 American soldiers were introduced into South Vietnam and were stationed in Pleiku and recently, additional US troops comprising 9,000 men have landed in South Vietnam and it is now reported that South Korea is preparing to send 20,000 soldiers to South Vietnam. All these facts prove that your president is not sincere yet in settling the Vietnam question in accordance with our position.

Though I do not intend discuss things now, I should like to point out that the US 14 points contain nothing new." Unquote.

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It will be noted contents above quite similar to his remarks to me as reported Embtel 365. Letter containing Aide-memoire was obviously hand carried as there were no stamps or postmarks. It sounds as if it were written prior to our second meeting but it seems if so Vu would have mentioned his reply to me. Also if hand carried why a three day delay? I can only guess that it was written after our second meeting and post dated so we cannot take position there was no reply. We will endeavor to find out about this if we can.

BYROADE

January 26, 1966

STATE 241 (to Amembassy RANGOON), S/Nodis, Immediate, Sent 26 Jan 66, 9 36 A.M.

1. Kohler saw DRV Charge in Moscow on 24th and found letter with nothing new to say. However, DRV Charge concluded conversation by saying that if USG wished any contacts they should be in Rangoon.

2. Accordingly, you should send message to DRV Consul General saying simply that you remain available and asking whether he has any instructions. This could be in form of response to his aide memoire delivered January 24. . . .

THE SECRETARY (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

January 27, 1966

AMEMBASSY RANGOON 374 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Immediate, Rec'd 27 Jan 66, 12:34 A.M. (Passed White House 27 Jan 66)

Ref: DepTel 241

1. At 10:32 this morning the following memorandum addressed to Vu Huu Binh was handed to a representative of DRV Consulate General here.

2. Quote I received on January 24, 1966 your Aide-memoire dated January 21, 1966 and have transmitted its contents to my government.

3. I have noted in it your statement that you have no instructions from your government to give me an answer to my Aide-memoire of December 29, 1965, and I wish to inquire whether such is still the case. In this connection I wish to assure you again that I remain available at any time to receive any communication you may wish to address to me. Unquote.

BYROADE

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January 31, 1966

RANGOON 389 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Flash , Sent 31 Jan 66; Rec'd 3:39 A.M., 31 Jan 66 (Passed to White House 3:55 A.M., 31 Jan 66)

Am seeing DRV Consul General Vu tonight at 7:30 P.M. at his rpt his request.

BYROADE

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RANGOON 392 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Immediate , Sent 31 Jan 66, Rec'd 31 Jan 66, 9:02 P.M. (Passed to White House 9:45 P.M. 31 Jan 66)

Text of Aide memoire referred to in Embtel 391 as follows:  
Quote I am forwarding to you the statement attached herewith made by the spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam dated January 4, 1966 regarding the so-called "Peace-efforts" made recently by the United States.

With regards to the 14 points and the subsequent statements of the United States Government I hold that the American authorities still refuse to recognise the fundamental national rights of the Vietnamese and people namely peace independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam as stipulated by the 1954 Geneva agreements of Vietnam.

The United States Government states that withdrawal of its troops from South Vietnam will be effected only under American terms, that means the United States refuses to withdraw its troops from South Vietnam.

The United States Government states that it seeks no military bases in South East Asian countries but on the other hand says it has to fulfil its commitments with the S.E.A.T.O. Bloc.

The United States Government says it respects the right to self-determination of the South Vietnamese people on condition that the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation lay down arms and be granted amnesty -- that means the United States tries to maintain a puppet regime in power countering the South Vietnamese people, does not recognize the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation as the sole genuine representative of the entire South Vietnamese people and will not engage in negotiations with the Front. The United States Government refuses to accept Point 3 of the 4-point stand of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, that amounts to American rejection of all the four points.

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Concerning the 4-point stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. . I beg to quote the above-said statement of the spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam: "A political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be envisaged only when the United States Government has accepted the 4-point stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, has proved this by actual deeds, has stopped unconditionally and for good its air raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

I am ready to listen to what the Ambassador may wish to expound on the United States position.

Rangoon dated January 31st 1966  
Mr. Vu Huu Binh, Consul General of the D.R.V. UNQUOTE

BYROADE

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RANGOON 394 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Immediate , Sent 31 Jan;  
Rec'd 31 Jan 66, 9:21 P.M. (Passed to White House 10:15 P.M., 31 Jan 66)

Interpreter for DRV representative Vu called early this afternoon to ask if I could meet with Vu at 7:30 PM tonight. I agreed and called on him then accompanied again by Leo Reddy.

His Aide memoire was still in the typewriter and we had a rather pleasant twenty minutes of small talk not touching on Vietnam. When document arrived he spoke at some length about his views on Vietnam situation. A close check with Reddy's notes indicates that he had practically memorized contents of Aide memoire and its contents should be accepted as accurate portrayal his remarks. He ended by asking if I had anything to say (along lines last sentence Aide memoire).

I said I would like to revert to our previous meeting and to his Aide memoire of January 21. The latter contained the following sentence "All of these facts prove that your President is not sincere yet in settling the Vietnam question in accordance with our position." He acknowledged his remembrance of this sentence.

I said I thought it expecting just too much that our President should be expected to be "sincere" in meeting "their" terms. They had their four points which were called "conditions." We had fourteen points which expressed what we believe. Was it not possible that responsible emissaries of our two Governments could meet and talk about all of these things together. All we asked was for unconditional talk or talks based upon the Geneva Agreements.

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There was some confusion, based I believe on faulty interpretation, and at one point he apparently thought I had said something new as he said he would have to report to his government. On further clarification however his answer was quite clear and definite. He said there was no possibility for negotiations unless we accepted their 4 points. He said their position was the embodiment of the minimum of their national rights. If we proved our acceptance of the Geneva Agreements by actual deeds there could be a basis for a political settlement. If we rejected the Geneva Agreements, which embody their rights, there could be no negotiations. What was needed from our side was the acceptance of these points by actual deeds. There was a non-conclusive discussion as to just whom had violated the Geneva Agreements. He asked if I had anything else to say.

I said that I did because we had heard from Hanoi publicly many times that our President was not sincere, that his peace effort was a phony and that we were deceitful in the whole exercise. I wanted to raise the question as to just who was sincere and who was not. Hanoi kept repeating, even as late as yesterday, that there were no North Vietnamese regular troops or troop units in the South. Almost no one believed this. There were plenty of prisoners from these units to disprove this stand of Hanoi. Representatives of many nations in Saigon knew the facts, yet these statements continued. I could not understand this and wished his comments. Vu said he took note of my remarks and would communicate them, but would not comment otherwise.

I said that I was nothing new in the positions he had given me tonight but was glad to talk to him in at event. He said if we were not careful we could get into endless quarrels. I said that there would never be anything personal about our differences of opinion and we should keep it that way so that sometime we both could be useful to our governments. He said he would communicate at any time whatever I had to say. He showed me on the way out a back gate to his house which would be much better to use as an entrance from a security point of view.

While the above doesn't sound like it, this was our most friendly meeting to date. Vu was very cordial and hospitable and seemed in a relaxed mood. If he knew of news reports that bombing had been resumed he gave no indications of it.

BYROADE

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February 1, 1966

RANGOON Immediate 396 (to SecState), S/Exdis, Rec'd Feb 1, 1966, 1:26 A.M.  
(Passed to White House 1 Feb 66, 1:43 a.m.)

Ref: EMBTEL 394

In reviewing the bidding on last night's discussions I find a sentence in the notes of Mr. Reddy which concerns me. This sentence is as follows: Quote in fact, your government agreed when the Geneva Agreements were drawn up that you would not use force to protect them. Unquote. This remark, if it was in fact made with use of these words, would have come chronologically at a point near the end of para 5 in above reftel where I reported that there was a non-conclusive discussion as to just whom had violated the Geneva Agreements.

It should be remembered that his discussion was through an interpreter. Our discussion at that point seemed to me at the time to be simply an exchange of statements as to which side had used force to violate the Geneva Agreements. On the other hand the statement in Reddy's notes says something quite different. It could imply that DRV in attacking South Vietnam though it would be secure against US military action, and that we were not playing the rules of the game as we had previously said we would not use force in such a situation.

. . . . .

BYROAD

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Hanoi VNA International Service in English 1737Z 1 Feb 66.

"Johnson Puts Everything in the Basket of Peace Except Peace

Text

Hanoi--Following is an article by Quang Loi in Vietnam Courier, a Hanoi fortnightly published in English and French, playing Johnson's deceitful search for peace campaign:

On 23 December 1965, Dean Rusk, in an interview with the Canadian Broadcasting Company, expounded American views on a settlement of the Vietnam problem. On 3 January 1966, the White House issued a communique entitled "The Heart of the Vietnam Problem." On 5 January 1966 Goldberg, U.S. Representative to

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the United Nations, sent U Thant a letter in which he reaffirmed his government's desire for a negotiated solution to the Vietnam problem.

With perfect synchronization, on 24 December 1965, the Pentagon ordered a temporary suspension of the criminal bombings against the DRV.

Since then, six emissaries sent by U.S. President Johnson have traveled the length and breadth of the five continents: Goldberg to The Vatican and Western Europe; Harriman to Poland, India, Pakistan, the UAR, some Asian countries, and Australia; Williams to Africa; Humphrey to the Far East; Bundy to Canada; and Thomas Mann to Mexico....

Never has the United States engaged in a diplomatic campaign on such a scale. It has, indeed, good reasons for doing so!

#### The Heart of the Vietnam Problem

The existence of the Vietnam problem is an undeniable fact. The presence in South Vietnam of a 200,000-strong U.S. expeditionary corps is another undeniable fact.

A constant preoccupation of the Washington rulers is how to justify American armed intervention in Vietnam. For this would allow them to explain to public opinion why there have been retaliations against the DRV.

This time, having found nothing better, the White House simply harked back to its old quibble: the South Vietnamese people's struggle against American interventionist troops is aggression from North Vietnam: it is this aggression from the outside which has resulted in the presence of U.S. troops. After affirming that it would be difficult to count U.S. and other countries' peace initiatives, the White House had made public U.S. contribution to the basket of peace:

1--The Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962 are an adequate basis for peace in Southeast Asia.

2--We would welcome a conference on Southeast Asia or on any part thereof.

3--We would welcome negotiations without preconditions, as the 17 nations put it.

4--We would welcome unconditional discussions, as President Johnson put it.

5--A cessation of hostilities could be the first order of business at a conference or could be the subject of preliminary discussions.

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6--Hanoi's four points could be discussed along with other points which others might wish to propose.

7--We want no U.S. bases in Southeast Asia.

8--We do not desire to retain U.S. troops in South Vietnam after peace is assured.

9--We support free elections in South Vietnam to give the South Vietnamese a government of their own choice.

10--The question of reunification of Vietnam should be determined by the Vietnamese through their own free decision.

11--The countries of Southeast Asia can be nonaligned or neutral if that be their opinion.

12--We could much prefer to use our resources for the economic reconstruction of Southeast Asia than in war. If there is peace, North Vietnam could participate in a regional effort to which he would be prepared to contribute at least 1 billion dollars.

13--The President has said: The VietCong would not have difficulty being represented and having their views represented if for a moment Hanoi decides who (as received) wanted to cease aggression. I do not think that would be an insurmountable problem.

14--We have said publicly and privately that we could stop the bombing of North Vietnam as a step toward peace although there has not been the slightest hint or suggestion from the other side as to what they would do if the bombing stopped.

We have deemed it useful to reprint in full the White House's 14 points so that our readers can judge them in all objectivity.

Where Does the Heart of the Matter Lie?

If one was to believe the White House, U.S. armed intervention would be legal for the thing for the United States is to keep its commitments to South Vietnam.

But the real commitments of the United States are completely different. Everyone knows that the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam have recognized the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Vietnam, and clearly stipulate that all participants in the 1954 Geneva Conference should abstain from interference in Vietnam's internal affairs. In the name of the U.S. Government, Bedell Smith, head of the American Delegation, declared at that conference that his government undertook to refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb the execution of these Accords.



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From the jurisdictional and political point of view, only that solemn commitment counts. It was taken at the final session of the Geneva Conference, and the U.S. Government must fully respect it.

However, the American imperialists have completely ignored it. They have been interfering ever more seriously in South Vietnam. They have brought to power a whole series of agents in their service. Through a system of advisors and aid, they have set up a neocolonialist regime and sabotaged the reunification of Vietnam, which was scheduled for 1956. They have covered South Vietnam with a network of military bases and suppressed all aspirations to peace and national reunification with Fascist measures taken by a most tyrannical regime. Even if U.S. commitments to the pro-American puppet administration did exist, they would not be valid simply for lack of a legal basis.

It is the American imperialists' policy of intervention and aggression that is the deep cause of the serious situation in South Vietnam. The people of South Vietnam have been forced to fight in self-defense to preserve their sacred national rights and their right to live. The struggle they have been waging is just and conforms to the spirit and letter of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam. This accounts for the growing approval and support of the world's people, including the American people, for the Vietnamese people.

On the contrary, all the efforts made by U.S. strategists to justify themselves before the American people and before history have come to grief. One remembers the White Paper issued by the State Department at the end of 1961 when the special war was launched, the Green Paper which followed it, and the second White Paper, "Why Vietnam?", published at the time when U.S. troops were being massively sent to South Vietnam. One remembers the tireless declarations made by the White House, and by U.S. President Johnson himself, and the innumerable trips undertaken by U.S. emissaries to almost all countries of the world. All this has ended in utter failure; never have the U.S. rulers experienced such serious political isolation. Everywhere, peace-loving people have strongly condemned American aggression in South Vietnam and the aerial bombings against the DRV. The publication of "The Heart of the Vietnam Problem" shows that Washington's efforts, although considerable, have failed to falsify the truth and to whitewash the American aggressors.

The 14 Points--A Barefaced Lie

In its new document, the White House mentions a few things which it has so far more or less evaded: respect for the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Agreements, U.S. intention not to set up any military bases in Southeast Asia and not to maintain troops in South Vietnam,

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freedom for the South Vietnamese people to choose their own government and for the Vietnamese people as a whole to decide on the reunification of Vietnam, and so forth.

The Johnson Administration has made those so-called concessions to make believe that the United States has renounced its aggression in Vietnam and accepted the four-point stand of the DRV, except the third point. But this American bluff is not so shrewd as it seemed at first.

The White House affirms that the United States does not desire to retain U.S. troops in South Vietnam after peace is assured. But peace in South Vietnam has been wrecked by the sending of an American expeditionary corps for direct aggression. As long as this latter remains in South Vietnam, how can peace be restored and assured? To say that the withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam will be effected only when peace is assured means to refuse to withdraw them until the Vietnamese people bow before American aggression.

The White House affirms that the United States wants no U.S. bases in Southeast Asia and that the countries of Southeast Asia can be nonaligned or neutral if that be their option. But in the introduction to the 14 points, it makes it clear that American commitments are based on, among other things, the SEATO Treaty. As SEATO is directed against the security of Southeast Asian countries, among them Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam, how can respect for the neutrality or nonalignment of Southeast Asian countries be compatible with American attachment to the objectives of SEATO? At bottom, the American imperialists remain the sworn enemy of neutral countries. It is not plain enough that they have never ceased to sabotage the neutrality of Laos and oppose the holding of an international conference guaranteeing the neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia? Did not Dean Rusk himself declare to the CBC on 23 December 1965 that South Vietnam's neutrality might be realized after the Viet Cong have laid down their arms and accepted the amnesty? In the American conception, neutrality is but a camouflage for neocolonialism.

The White House affirms that the United States respects the South Vietnam people's freedom of self-determination and right to choose their own government through free elections. How can free elections be held when the country still remains under the control of American troops and when the United States wants, as Dean Rusk has admitted, the capitulation of the South Vietnamese people? The American imperialists talk about the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination: in fact, they only want to impose on them a puppet regime in the U.S. imperialists' pay.

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The White House talks about the Vietnamese people's free decision on the reunification of Vietnam. How can this reunification be brought about when a pro-American puppet government is maintained in South Vietnam with the bayonets of an American expeditionary corps? In spite of all their protestations of good will, the American imperialists can never hide their intention of perpetuating the division of Vietnam.

The White House drops a hint that the United States would accept the stand of the DRV government, except its third point. This third point says: The affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by its own people, according to the political program of the NFLSV-- South Vietnam National Front for Liberation--without any foreign interference.

The NFLSV, the only authentic representative of the South Vietnamese people, controls at present four-fifths of the territory, inhabited by 10 million people. Its program aims at realizing independence, democracy, peace and neutrality in South Vietnam and the eventual peaceful reunification in Vietnam. It envisages the setting up of a democratic government of broad national union. If it is true that the U.S. Government respects the Vietnamese people's right to self-determination, how can it justify its refusal to accept that third point? This refusal means simply the negation of all other demagogic promises of the White House. At bottom, the American imperialists stubbornly refuse to recognize the four-point stand of the DRV government. Their own position remains unchanged: to cling to South Vietnam, to maintain their troops there and the Saigon puppet administration, to turn South Vietnam into a U.S. military base and new-type colony, and to perpetuate the division of Vietnam.

In Fact a Smokescreen.

Armed aggression in South Vietnam, aerial warfare against the DRV, heinous crimes committed against the South Vietnamese people--all this has aroused universal indignation against the American imperialists. On the other hand, the just stand of the DRV government and that of the NFLSV receive the full approval of the whole of progressive mankind.

The noisy peace campaign and the 14 points put forward by the White House, however skillfully concerted, nevertheless betray the American imperialists' intention of deceiving American and world opinion, forcing on the Vietnamese people acceptance of their conditions, while actively preparing for the intensification and expansion of the aggressive war in Vietnam.

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In the first three weeks along of January 1966, the American imperialists sent 12,000 men to South Vietnam, bringing the number of their troops to more than 200,000. Numerous sources have revealed their planned increase to 400,000. Massive means of extermination are being used on a growing scale in South Vietnam, resulting in abominable crimes.

Air reconnaissance is being continued with a view to renewed bombings in the DRV. Several American generals have talked about bombing raids to be conducted on the populated industrial areas of Hanoi and Haiphong, and other criminal schemes.

The American imperialists have not only intensified their aerial bombings in Laos and multiplied armed provocations against Cambodia. They even talk about pursuing the Viet Cong into Laotian and Cambodian territory, which means extending their aggressive war to the whole of Indochina.

The American imperialists said that they have put everything in the basket of peace. They have indeed, except peace. Let them nurture no illusion about the effectiveness of their threats and lies. As the spokesman of the DRV Foreign Ministry stated on 4 January 1966: The Vietnamese people eagerly want peace for national construction, but they know full well that real independence must be achieved if genuine peace is to be secured.

A political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be envisaged only when the U.S. Government has accepted the four-point stand of the DRV government, has proved this by actual deeds, and has stopped unconditionally and for good its air raids and all other acts of war against the DRV.

February 2, 1966

STATE 253 (to Amembassy RANGOON), S/Nodis, Immediate, Sent 2 Feb 66  
8:44 P.M.

. . . . .

2. ...we wish to give some response and also to test whether Hanoi is still willing to talk after the resumption (which your man apparently did not know about and on which his communications might not have permitted a cancelling message to get through on Monday). Accordingly, you should send him a short note acknowledging his communication, saying it is under careful study in Washington, and that we expect to have a detailed response in a very few days.

3. . . . .

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

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February 3, 1966

STATE Memorandum for SecState from William P. Bundy, dated Feb. 3, 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

SUBJECT: DRV Approach in Rangoon on January 31

It seems to me that our response to this approach will take careful thought. As a first step, since Byroade's cables are hard to read together, I have done the attached pull-together, which contains the full text of the aide memoire, and also the points made in the oral conversation. I think this gives us a much better starting point, with numerical headings, for our own reply. (Tab A).

We may know much better, on the basis of Byroade's interim response, whether Hanoi really intended to start a dialogue after the resumption. In the meantime, the present facts appear to indicate that Hanoi may have sent the instructions prior to the resumption, but that it should have been possible to send a last-minute "recall" or "cancel" message if Hanoi had desired. Byroade reports that the DRV interpreter came to him to seek the appointment in the "early afternoon" of January 31, Rangoon time. (Rangoon time is 1 1/2 hours earlier than Saigon time.) This would suggest that the appointment was sought not earlier than 1500 Saigon time, whereas the first bombs had fallen at about 0900 Saigon time. The fact that the aide memoire was still being typed when Byroade arrived at 1930 Rangoon time would suggest that the instructions must have been freshly received and that there may even have been a preliminary instruction to seek an appointment, followed by the later transmission of the detailed instructions. By 1730 Rangoon time (1900 Saigon time) ten hours had elapsed after the resumption (which we assume was instantaneously reported to Hanoi). We believe that Hanoi's communications to Rangoon may go either by direct commercial cable or by relay through Peiping, using some cryptographic system that is presumably immune to Chicom reading. We are now checking whether NSA has any reading on message transmissions of that date, but what stands out is that it would surely have been possible for Hanoi to send a fast commercial cable that need not have said anything more than a short instruction not to carry out prior instructions. In other words, the evidence does add up to a high probability that Hanoi was prepared to go through with the contact notwithstanding the resumption. Indeed, there appears to be a substantial possibility on the timing, that Hanoi even waited till it knew of the resumption before it dispatched the instructions. Paradoxical as it may seem, Hanoi may have been unwilling to open any dialogue during the suspension, lest this appear as a sign of weakness, and fear of our bombing.

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A second collateral aspect worthy of note is that Hanoi broadcast, on the evening of February 1, Saigon time, in English, a lengthy article, the so-called "Quang Loi" article, which is by far the most detailed exposition of Hanoi's reaction to the Fourteen Points. For the first time, the actual text of the Fourteen Points was published, and the article goes on to explore their meaning, with a fair amount of invective, but in general in a far more moderate and reasoned tone than the overwhelming bulk of its output during the suspension. It seems to me essential that the aide memoire received in Rangoon be read in conjunction with the Quang Loi article, which I have therefore attached as Tab B.

Thirdly, the aide memoire itself refers to the DRV Foreign Ministry statement of January 4, and in effect incorporates this by reference. The January 4 statement, attached as Tab C, is a fairly straightforward reiteration of the Four Points, with no reference to our Fourteen Points except in highly general terms.

Because of the length of the two related Hanoi statements in Tabs B and C, I have sidelined key passages.

/s/ WPB  
WILLIAM P. BUNDY

3 Encl

- 1 - Tab A - Bundy Summary
- 2 - Tab B - Quang Loi Article
- 3 - Tab C - January 4 Hanoi Statement

THE RANGOON APPROACH OF JANUARY 31  
(From Rangoon 392-296)

Text of Aide Memoire (See cables cited)  
(Para Numbers Added)

.....

Points Made in Conversation (Para Numbers Added)

8. After the reading of the aide memoire, the DRV man asked if Byroade had anything to say. Byroade reverted to the earlier Rangoon aide memoire questioning the President's sincerity, and said that it was expecting too much that the President should be expected to be "sincere" in meeting "their" terms. Hanoi had its Four Points which were called "conditions." We had Fourteen Points which expressed what we believe. Was it not possible that responsible emissaries of our two governments could meet and talk about all of these things together? All we asked was for unconditional talks or talks based upon the Geneva Agreements.

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9. The DRV man was at first confused and thought Byroade had said something new. However, on clarification, his answer was quite clear and definite. He said there was no possibility for negotiations unless we accepted their Four Points. He said their position was the embodiment of the minimum of their national rights. If we proved our acceptance of the Geneva Agreements by actual deeds there could be a basis for a political settlement. If we rejected the Geneva Agreements, which embody these rights, there could be no repeat no negotiations. What was needed from our side was the acceptance of these points by actual deeds.

10. There was then a non-conclusive discussion as to who had violated the Geneva Accords. In the course of this discussion, the DRV man asserted that, when the Geneva Agreements had been drawn up, the US had agreed that it would not use force to protect them. (Byroade's 396 thinks that this statement, in its context, conveyed an implication that the DRV had thought that, in attacking South Vietnam, it would be secure against US military action -- that, in short, the DRV had been misled. The facts on this point are that Bedell Smith said that we would not ourselves use force to disturb the Agreements, but went on to say that we would view the use of force by others with grave concern. In other words, the statements by the DRV man distort the record substantially.)

11. Then, in response to the DRV man's asking whether Byroade had anything else to say, Byroade reverted to the question of sincerity and raised the question as to just who was sincere and who was not, when Hanoi kept repeating, as late as January 30, that there were no North Vietnamese regular troops or troop units in the South. Byroade pointed out that almost no one believed this and that there were plenty of prisoners to disprove it. Yet these statements continued. The DRV man took note of these remarks and said he would communicate them, but did not comment otherwise.

12. In conclusion, Byroade said that he saw nothing new in the positions the DRV man had given him, but was glad to talk with him in any event. He added "He (the DRV man) said if we were not careful we could get into endless quarrels. I said that there would never be anything personal about our differences of opinion and we should keep it that way so that sometime we both could be useful to our governments. He said he would communicate at any time whatever, I had to say. He showed me on the way out a back gate to his house which would be much better to use as an entrance from a security point of view."

13. Byroade's closing comment was as follows: "While the above doesn't sound like it, this was our most friendly meeting to date. Vu was very cordial and hospitable and seemed in a relaxed mood. If he knew of news reports that bombing had been resumed he gave no indications of it."

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RANGOON 398 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Priority, Sent 3 Feb 66; Rec'd 3 Feb 66, 5:44 A.M.

Ref: DepTel 253

We have arranged to deliver the following memorandum ...

Text follows "I refer to our last discussion on January 31, 1966, in which you presented me with an aide-memoire which in turn enclosed a statement made by a spokesman of the foreign ministry of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam dated January 4, 1966.

I wish to inform you that these matters are under careful study in Washington, and that I think I may have a detailed response for you in a few days time."

. . . .

BYROADE

February 7, 1966

RANGOON 406 (to Sec State), S/Nodis, Priority, Rec'd 7 Feb 1966, 10:42 P.M. (Passed to White House 8 Feb 66, 12:30 A.M.)

English language papers this morning frontpaged AP and UPI stories, quoting "Administration" and "informed" sources, of direct contact made by me here with DRV on Dec. 29. No mention of continuing contacts.

I have told RGUB and have passed word to Vu that I will not rpt not confirm, but will stand on no rpt no comment.

BYROADE

February 8, 1966

RANGOON 411 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Priority, Rec'd 8 Feb 66, 6:03 A.M., (Passed White House 8 Feb 66)

1. GVN Consul General Duc requested appointment see me today. . . . Responding to his expected questions re contact in Rangoon between Ambassador Byroade and DRV ConGen as reported in wire services, I took line previously agreed on with Ambassador Byroade that all embassies had strict instructions not to comment on any channels of communication with North Vietnam; that Ambassador Byroade had had similar inquiries put to him before departing for Bangkok and was not commenting. Moreover, I was in no position to speculate about contacts.

2. Duc unagressive and did not press further.

RANARD



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February 16, 1966

STATE 267 (to Amembassy RANGOON), S/Nodis, Priority, Sent 16 Feb 68,  
11:38 A.M.

You should seek appointment with DRV Consul General to deliver  
following aide-memoire:

BEGIN TEXT:

1. The USG has taken note of the Aide Memoire delivered to the  
American Ambassador in Rangoon on January 31, 1966.

2. The USG fully respects the basic rights of the Vietnamese  
people to peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial  
integrity, as set forth in the Geneva Accords of 1954. As the USG  
has repeatedly said, it believes that these Accords, together with  
the 1962 Accords concerning Laos, are an adequate basis for peace  
in Southeast Asia or for negotiations looking toward a peaceful  
settlement.

3. The USG has repeatedly stated and hereby reaffirms that it  
is prepared to withdraw its forces from South Viet-Nam when peace is  
restored. The US has never stated that it must be the sole judge of  
when this condition exists. Plainly, the restoration of peace  
requires the adherence of all concerned to the essential provisions  
of the Geneva Accords dealing with the regroupment of opposing forces  
to their respective areas, and dealing with the obligations that the  
two zones shall not be utilized for the resumption of hostilities or  
in the service of an aggressive policy. It is the view of the USG  
that the DRV, in introducing armed forces, military equipment, and  
political cadres into South Viet-Nam, has breached the provisions of  
the Accords, and has thus made necessary the actions undertaken by  
the USG in support of the legitimate right of the Republic of Viet-Nam  
to self-defense. The withdrawal of US forces would be undertaken in  
the light of the actions taken by the DRV in this regard, and would  
necessarily be subject also to the existence of adequate measures of  
verification.

The USG seeks no military bases of any kind in South Viet-Nam and  
has no desire whatever to retain its forces in South Viet-Nam after  
peace is secured.

4. With respect to the third of the DRV's four points, the US  
takes note that Chairman Ho Chi Minh in his letter of January 29  
described the program of the NLF as seeking "to achieve independence,  
democracy, peace and neutrality in South Viet-Nam and to advance  
toward peaceful reunification." If this is all that is intended

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when it is stated that the affairs of the South Vietnamese be settled "in accordance with the program of the NLF," the third point would not be an obstacle to negotiations.

However, it appears that in referring to the program of the NLF the DRV may contemplate that the NLF arbitrarily be accorded integral participation in a coalition government or be accepted as the "sole genuine representative of the entire South Vietnamese people" prior to, and without regard to, an election. If this is what is meant by the third point, we would consider it in contradiction of the very objectives specified above, and quite without warrant in the Geneva Accords of 1954.

It remains the essence of the USG view that the future political structure in South Viet-Nam should be determined by the South Vietnamese people themselves through truly free elections. The USG is categorically prepared to accept the results of elections held in an atmosphere free from force, intimidation or outside interference.

5. In the light of the foregoing and to make clear our understanding of a possible basis for discussions leading to a peaceful settlement, we submit for consideration of the DRV the following:

Point I - The basic rights of the Vietnamese people to peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity are recognized as set forth in the Geneva Accords of 1954. Obtaining compliance with the essential principles in the Accords is an appropriate subject for immediate, international discussions, or negotiations without preconditions. Such discussions or negotiations should consider, among other things, appropriate means, including agreed stages, for the withdrawal of military and quasi-military personnel and weapons introduced into South Viet-Nam or North Viet-Nam from one area to the other or into either area from any other outside source; the dismantling of any military bases in either areas, and the cancellation of any military alliances, that may contravene the Accords; and the regrouping and redeployment of indigenous forces.

Point II - Strict compliance with the military provisions of the Geneva Accords must be achieved in accordance with schedules and appropriate safeguards to be agreed upon in the said discussions or negotiations.

Point III - The internal affairs of South and North Viet-Nam must be settled respectively by the South and North Vietnamese peoples themselves in conformity with the principles of self-determination. Neither shall interfere in the affairs of the other nor shall there be any interference from any outside source.

Point IV - The issue of reunification of Viet-Nam must be decided peacefully, on the basis of free determination by the peoples of South and North Viet-Nam without outside interference. END TEXT

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6. In delivering text, you should take care not to go beyond its terms in providing explanation to any questions asked. Naturally, we would be most interested in any comments he may care to make then or at future date.

7. FYI: Bundy will bring to Baguio some additional material for your background in case of future contacts. However, for time being, we do not wish to be drawn into extended oral discussion which might be misunderstood. END FYI.

8. In arranging appointment, you should avoid any impression of undue urgency.

February 19, 1966

RANGOON 433 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Priority, Rec'd 19 Feb 1966, 11:33 A.M.

DRV Rep Vu received me at 7:00 P.M. . . .

Vu did not try to read document in English but listened attentively as his interpreter translated document for him.

. . . . .

Vu said he would transmit our Aide-Memoire to his government. He said that if I had anything else to add that I should go ahead with it. I said that my instructions had been covered fully by the document now in his hands and that I had nothing more for the present. Vu then said that since our last meeting there had been many developments in the situation. He said that their stand on the grounds for agreement must be based on the fact that the US has resumed the bombing. He said this was a gross violation of the sovereignty and national independence of a state. American forces had been intensifying the war and following a policy of kill all, burn all, destroy all. Also there was the fact of the joint declaration of the USG and the South Vietnamese authorities. He said the points made therein only served the cause of the American war.

He then said "I also wish to avail myself of the occasion of this meeting to inform you something else today. Since the US has resumed the bombing, I hold that it is inappropriate to continue our contacts."

. . . . .

. . . . .

...I said I wanted to be very sure I had understood correctly his statement about future contacts between us, and asked if he could amplify his remarks. He repeated verbatim his previous words except that this time he used the expression "It is inappropriate to continue

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our talks at your request." He said he thought he had expressed himself clearly. He would however follow up by sending me an Aide-Memoire, as he had been speaking under instructions.

. . . . .

BYROADE

February 21, 1966

RANGOON 436 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Immediate, Rec'd 21 Feb 66, 2:01 PM

Ref: EMBTEL 433

The following aide-memoire dated Feb 19 from DRV representative Vu addressed to me was hand delivered to the Embassy this evening. Quote: At this meeting held at your request, I find it necessary to make the following statements:

The resumption of the bombing of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the increase of American armed forces and of war aid to the South Vietnam authorities, rigged up by the United States, on order of the United States Government and the issue of a joint declaration at the Honolulu Conference by the United States and the South Vietnam authorities have exposed the true colour of the "Peace Efforts" Manoeuvred by the American government. The American government is doing its utmost to intensity and expend its aggressive war in Vietnam and Indochinese countries, bringing it to a new stage, seriously endangering peace and security of the countries in this region. The American government must bear full responsibility for the consequences resulted in by the aggressive war it wages. The bombing of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, an independent and sovereign country, ordered by the United States Government constitutes an unpardonable aggressive act. In so doing, the American Government not only grossly violates and tramples under foot the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam which it solemnly undertakes to respect but also brazenly breaches the United Nations Charter and the most elementary norms of justice and human rights.

Conducting the destructive war in South Vietnam with every kind of American, most modern weapons including those strictly prohibited by International Law as noxious chemicals and gas, the American Expeditionary Troops and the mercenary troops have been carrying out wherever they go the scorched earth policy killing all, burning all and destroying all. If the United States Government thinks that its utmost barbarous and cruel aggressive policy as such can subjugate the Vietnamese people, that will be a great mistake and here day-dream.

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The Honolulu Conference and the Joint Declaration signed at that conference by the United States and South Vietnam puppet authorities represent the entire scheme of the United States to bring the aggressive war in South Vietnam to a new stage. Therefore, such hypocritical terms of the said declaration a "opposition to aggression," "fulfilment of commitments," "continuation of peace efforts," "self-determination", "rural reconstruction program," etc. are in essence aimed at covering up the designs of the aggressive war in South Vietnam.

Faced with the strength of unbreakable unity and determination to fight and to win of the Vietnamese people who enjoy the strong sympathy and support of the world people including the American people, the efforts made so far or to be made in the future by the American Government cannot remove the more and more critical situation of the American troops and the mercenary troops who are now falling into a quagmire in South Vietnam but will only bring them instead even bigger and more ignominious setbacks and eventually total defeat. It is the Vietnamese people who decide the outcome of the war they wage against the American invaders. They have won and will triumph. Such is the truth that has been realized and admitted by the majority of the American people and a number of persons among the American political circle but denied by the United States Government.

If the United States Government really wants to settle the Vietnam question peacefully, it should accept the four-point stand of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and prove its acceptance by actual deeds and stop for good and unconditionally its bombing of North Vietnam and all other war acts against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Only so can a political settlement of the Vietnam question be envisaged.

As the United States Government has ordered the resumption of bombing raids on the Democratic of Republic of Vietnam, I consider it inappropriate to continue the contacts made at your request between you and myself. Unquote.

BYROADE

RONNING

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THE RONNING MISSIONS - MARCH AND JUNE 1966

Ronning Revs Up

Chester Ronning's "unofficial" trip to the Orient on behalf of peace was proposed by the Canadians in late January 1966. It evoked formal U.S. support and unvoiced U.S. trepidations. A Sinologist and retired diplomat, Ronning was known to hold a critical view of U.S. policies toward China and Vietnam. He hoped to visit Peking and Hanoi, relying for his welcome in China on a long-standing invitation from Ch'en Yi, with whom he had friendly relations, and Hanoi on his bearing Pearson's answer to Ho Chi Minh's letter of January 24.

Both Washington and our Embassy in Ottawa guessed an ulterior motive for the trip: Canadian Foreign Minister Paul Martin wanted to test the wind for changes in Canadian policy on Chinese representation in the UN, possible recognition of Communist China, and, more generally, a demonstration that Canada was not a U.S. "satellite." Under the circumstances (the 37 day bombing pause was still running), there seemed no proper response other than encouragement, even though the U.S. doubted the mission would produce much. (1/27/66, 2/4/66, 2/25/66)

By February 24, Peking had refused to issue Ronning a visa (2/24/66), and the reason is not difficult to guess. Ronning's itinerary and intention to visit Hanoi would have shown Peking that he hoped to play the mediator between NVN and the U.S. Chinese Communist policy insisted that the war be fought until the U.S. was defeated. Nevertheless, the DRV permitted him to come and, during his stay (March 7-11) gave him access to a number of high officials.

The March Visit: "Talks" in Exchange for a Bombing Cessation

Ronning characterized the results of his March 7-11 visit with an old Chinese saying: he had "travelled ten thousand miles to present a feather." (3/15/66) Although treated with deference,\* he was unable to move the DRV leaders from their insistence on the "Four Points" as the only basis for a peaceful settlement. They felt confident of keeping up their end of the war. (They expected destruction of Hanoi and Haiphong, they said, and were evacuating women and children, dispersing factories and offices, etc.) When Ronning protested their "Four Points" as tantamount to U.S. surrender, their attitude seemed to be "that's America's problem." (3/15/66)

Toward the end of Ronning's 2-hour interview with Pham Van Dong, however, he was told that DRV willingness to enter into some form of preliminary contact hinged on a commitment by the U.S. to cease "bombing

\* He was received by the DRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh, the Vice Foreign Minister, Nguyen Co Thach, Col. Ha Van Lau (NVA liaison to the ICC) and, on his last day, Pham Van Dong.

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and all acts of war against North Vietnam" "unconditionally and for good." \*  
It was not clear whether a public declaration or something more confidential  
was demanded, nor what the nature of the consequent contacts would be.  
Pham Van Dong refused to be drawn out, saying only: "Our position includes  
many aspects. In brief, we can say that informal talks and a cessation of  
attacks against North Vietnam go together." (3/20/66)

Ronning felt that a U.S. response was desired. The importance of  
secrecy was stressed to him. When earlier feelers had become public,  
the DRV had been forced to deny them, he was told.

Arranging the Second Trip: Canada in the Middle

Ronning's report aroused little enthusiasm in Washington, which:

--Felt that any U.S. de-escalation should be reciprocated by  
military de-escalation on the other side.

--Feared that a bombing halt would be interpreted to mean U.S.  
acceptance of Hanoi's Four Points.\*\* (4/26/66)

Martin, however, felt strongly that the channel should be kept  
active and pressed Washington personally and through channels to respond.  
In what may have been a veiled form of pressure, he informed Washington  
that his Government "did have important information of which it was the  
sole possessor." (4/22/66, 4/26/66)

By May 1, Washington had prepared a "new" message for Ronning,  
restating its willingness to talk without conditions, or to de-escalate  
mutually, to communicate with Hanoi directly or via intermediaries, etc.  
(4/30/66)

When Ottawa approached Hanoi about a return visit by Ronning, it  
was criticized by the North Vietnamese for failing to distinguish between  
aggressor and victim, and of advancing proposals not conforming to the  
1954 Geneva accords, etc. Toward the end of May, it obtained grudging  
permission for Ronning to come along, however. (5/24/66)

\* Ronning was promised an Aide-Memoire on Pham's remarks, but was sub-  
sequently told that he had "misunderstood" and no such paper would be  
forthcoming. In his written summary of the conversation, Ronning used  
quotation marks in the manner reproduced here. Presumably, he felt  
confident he was accurately repeating Pham's language.

\*\* In his January 24, 1966, letter to heads of state, Ho had demanded that  
the U.S. "accept the four-point stand of the DRV Government and prove  
this by actual deeds; it must end unconditionally and for good all  
bombing raids and other acts of war against the DRV."



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The June Visit: No Movement by Either Side

Ronning visited Hanoi a second time, June 14-17, 1966, with even more disappointing results than in March.

He was told that Pham Van Dong was not then in Hanoi, and the highest official to receive him was Nguyen Duy Trinh, Foreign Minister and Vice Premier. Trinh expressed disappointment that the message Ronning carried was so "similar to newspaper reports with which the DRV was already familiar." Ronning, looking back a week later, felt "totally depressed following his conversation with Trinh" and did not detect "any hint on Trinh's part of a desire to put forward any new or alternative proposals." (6/21/66)

The main points made by Trinh were:

--There would be no military reciprocity for a bombing halt.

--The Canadians were abetting the U.S. "peace offensive" by appearing to mediate when they had nothing new to contribute--and doing so in a period (since March) when the U.S. was "escalating." When Ronning offered to withdraw, though, Trinh asked that the Canadian channel remain available.

--The Four Points were not mentioned per se, but their contents and the NLF Five Points were stressed as elements the U.S. would have to accept eventually.

--Neither the Four nor the Five Points were preconditions for "talks", however. If the U.S. stopped bombing completely, the DRV would talk. (6/21/66)

Although Ronning saw no promising new approach that might be offered the DRV at that time, Martin clearly wished to maintain the Canadian channel and seemed determined to find some role for Canadian peace-making efforts in the future. (6/23/66)

General Topics Raised During Ronning's Contacts

The following are topics raised with Ronning which also appear frequently during other negotiating sequences.

"Talks" vs "Negotiations"

Bundy visited Ottawa on June 21 to review Ronning's experiences with Ronning, Martin and other Canadians. As he cabled back, they concluded that "the total DRV comment appeared to add up to there being a

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satisfactory prior understanding, before 'negotiations' as to (1) our recognition of the status of the NLF (not spelled out); (2) return to the 1954 Agreements; (3) withdrawal of US forces (not specified whether this must take place prior to negotiations or as to the ultimate result); (4) the Four Points." In distinction to these conditions for negotiations, "the DRV reps did say categorically that acceptance of the Four Points was not a necessary condition to preliminary talks. The only condition for such preliminary talks is our unilateral cessation of bombing. However, ...this appears to relate only to resumption of Rangoon-type contact, and as to any substantive negotiations the Four Points are still in the picture." (6/21/66)

"Permanent and Unconditional"

On Ronning's first visit, the North Vietnamese indicated a willingness to talk if "the bombing and all other acts of war" were unilaterally ceased "unconditionally and for good." This statement clearly contained two qualifiers: no reciprocity from Hanoi and no threat of resumption. Ronning, however, was not told that Hanoi would only "talk." The two qualifiers taken together were sufficient, but that they both were necessary was not clear. Ronning never tested this. Trinh, in January 1967, dropped the "permanent" qualifier, but at the same time, made it plain that a U.S. bombing cessation would buy only "talks."

"Peace Offensives vs. Military Offensives"

The timing of Ronning's second visit--mid-June--was awkward for the U.S., as it was planned to bomb POL facilities through the DRV, including Hanoi, at just that time. Such an attack would be difficult to reconcile with our support for Ronning's mission. (5/9/66, 6/8/66, 6/15/66). An attempt to circumvent this problem was made by delaying the strikes but seeking the earliest possible report from Ronning on Hanoi's response. (6/17/66) Ronning, however, had been told to report only to Ottawa, upon his return. (6/17/66, 6/18/66) Furthermore, Martin specifically asked us not to "escalate" in the period just after Ronning's return for fear that this would "jeopardize Canadian good faith with Hanoi and make it appear the U.S. used Ronning as a means of obtaining a negative readout on negotiations which would justify escalation." (6/20/66) In effect, the Canadian initiative seemed to require that we not escalate just before, during or just after contacts with Hanoi. Moreover, Martin wished to maintain a continuing dialogue with Hanoi. The POL system was attacked toward the end of June.

Secrecy

The North Vietnamese repeatedly stressed the importance of keeping their contacts secret and repeatedly complained of leaks to the press. (6/21/66) To illustrate the gravity of the matter, the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs told Moore (the Canadian ICC representative) that the La Pira peace feeler had been genuine, but that Hanoi had had to denounce it when it leaked. (6/8/66)

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On the other hand, an Eastern European Embassy in Hanoi briefed Raffaelli, the AFP correspondent there, on the content of Ronning's June exchanges with relative accuracy. The French Embassy in Washington and Americans assumed that the information had been passed with DRV approval, without satisfactorily resolving the question of DRV motives in providing this leak.

Reunification

The subject of reunifying the two Vietnams was broached to Moore on one of his routine visits to Hanoi early in June, 1966, by Ha Van Lau. The main point stressed by Lau was that "After the fighting stops, there should be a fairly long interval, during which the status quo continues with the two countries divided at the 17th parallel.... After that, it would be possible to see whether there were some changed ideas in Saigon and Hanoi." (6/8/66) When Ronning visited Hanoi, later that month, the subject was not emphasized by the Vietnamese, but was raised in the context of observing the 1954 Geneva Agreements. (6/21/66)

POW's

The U.S. asked Ronning to scout the possibility of exchanging prisoners of war with the DRV or providing them with ICRC protection. (5/15/66) Hanoi's reply was that POW's were "criminals" under DRV law and no ICRC role would be considered. He was given no detailed information about the prisoners themselves. (6/23/66)

Another Geneva Conference?

In the event of negotiations beginning, DRV officials indicated to Ronning that they would consider a Geneva-type conference on Vietnam and observed that they would favor French participation. With some prodding from an Ottawa colleague, Ronning reconstructed the following as a possible sequence: (1) an end to the U.S. bombing on DRV terms; (2) informal bilateral DRV-U.S. talks; (3) a multilateral Geneva-type conference. (6/21/66)



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January 27, 1966

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION; Participants: H. E. Charles S. A. Ritchie, Ambassador of Canada, Mr. Chester Ronning, former Canadian Ambassador, Mr. William P. Bundy, Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, and Mr. Paul H. Kreisberg, FE/ACA.

"....

"...Ronning said he was without illusions on the likelihood of any success from this mission but thought it was worth a try. He said the Canadian line would be to express surprise at Peking's and Hanoi's opposition to a conference in view of their participation in the Laos conference.

"....

"Ronning then inquired about the position of the NLF.

"Mr. Bundy reviewed the U.S. position on the NLF, stressing that we are prepared to have them present in some form at a conference but not in full status as a 'party' but anything short of that we would be prepared to consider. He...stressed that acknowledgment of full status for the NLF would be pre-judging the right of the NLF to participate in a future government in South Vietnam. He noted that the NLF program called for the Front to have a main role in a coalition government and said that to admit this would quite frankly lead to their ultimate victory...."

"...Ronning suggested that there might be an analogy between NLF participation in a conference and that of the Pathet Lao in the Laos conference.

"....

"Ronning said that he was convinced the DRV would continue to deny its military participation in South Vietnam but might accept something less clear-cut. He said the DRV did not want a branch of the CP in South Vietnam ever to declare its independence of North Vietnam. He suggested that bilateral U.S.-DRV talks without the GVN might offer some possibilities.

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"Mr. Bundy said this was possible and we had offered this to the DRV during the pause. He noted that it might be necessary to arrive at some 'pre-digested' conclusion in such a forum. He observed, however, that the question of disclosure to the GVN presented a serious problem. Ronning stressed that the DRV could not sit at the conference table without the NLF since this would place all responsibility for military action in South Vietnam on itself.

"Mr. Bundy reiterated that the NLF was a really tough problem since it ran so close to the heart of the matter. It was possible to finesse other points, for example, accepting the four points implicitly by reiterating acceptance of the Geneva Accords, or simply deleting the objectionable clause in point three. Mr. Bundy said that the DRV still thought it could win the whole game but that ultimately, if it was convinced that there was no military victory possible, it might re-frame its political requirements and move for a political solution. He noted that we could without particular difficulty "de-fuse" point 13 of our 14 points by omitting the reference in that point to "aggression." Mr. Bundy also noted that the DRV was concerned about the timing of U.S. withdrawal.

January 27, 1966

STATE to AmEmbassy OTTAWA 826 (SECRET-EXDIS), 27 Jan 1966:

"For Ambassador from Bundy

"1. Canadian Ambassador Ritchie and former Canadian High Commissioner in New Delhi Ronning called on Bundy today and discussed planned visit by Amb. Ronning to Peking and Hanoi in near future. Ronning visit to be unofficial but he will travel with personal rank of Ambassador and at request of Foreign Minister Martin. Ronning has long-standing invitation from Chicom Fomin Chen Yi to visit CPR extended when Ronning was Canadian Rep at 1962 Geneva Conference on Laos. Purpose of visit to sound out Peking and Hanoi on possible conference on Vietnam. Ronning said he without any illusions as to likelihood of success but thought visit in any event might be worthwhile.

....."

RUSK (Drafted by P. H. Kreisberg)

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January 28, 1966

STATE to AmEmbassy OTTAWA 830 (SECRET-EXDIS), 28 Jan 1966

"1. ...we certainly have no objection to proposed Ronning trip....

"2. It occurs to us that Ronning trip may well have ulterior motives in terms of Canadian feelers on Chicom representation in UN or even Canadian recognition...."

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

AmEmbassy OTTAWA to SECSTATE 974 (SECRET-EXDIS), 28 Jan 1966

"For Bundy from Butterworth

"....

"3. Ever since he became Minister for External Affairs two and a half years ago Martin has had the idea of using Chester Ronning, who was born in China and went to school with Chou En-lai, to help bring about recognition of the Chinese Communists by the UN or by Canada or both.

"....

"5. Ronning is well-known in Canada as a Sinologist and has been more often than not critical of American Far Eastern policies....

....."

BUTTERWORTH

January 31, 1966

AmEmbassy OTTAWA to SECSTATE 981 (SECRET-EXDIS), 31 Jan 1966

"....

"2. ...Pearson confirmed Ronning mission was Martin's idea, that it entailed greater dangers than Martin had perhaps appreciated and that he had 'scared the hell out of Paul about it last night'...if anything went wrong, his government would disavow any involvement in the Ronning mission...."

BUTTERWORTH

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AmEmbassy OTTAWA to SECSTATE 979 (SECRET-EXDIS), 31 Jan 1966

"....

"5. ...Martin volunteered that he had clearly in mind the domestic political scene and 'Diefenbaker's insincere support of the U.S. position in Vietnam' and that at some point he should demonstrate to the Canadian people that Canada had not just been a U.S. satellite but had done what it could to bring about a solution...."

BUTTERWORTH

February 2, 1966

AmEmbassy OTTAWA to SECSTATE 996 (SECRET-EXDIS), 2 Feb 1966

"For Assistant Secretary Bundy

"...Incredible though it may seem EXTAFF official stated Ronning's passport reads 'Special Emissary of Canadian Government with Personal Rank of Ambassador.' Ploy with Hanoi for obtaining visa is that Ronning interested in discussing Ho Chi Minh letter of January 24 to Prime Minister Pearson. Text of letter (copy being sent Dept. separately) parallels that sent other capitals except for last two sentences as follows: 'Your Excellency, Canada is a member of the International Commission for Supervision and Control for the Implementation of the 1954 Geneva Agreement on Vietnam. In face of the extremely serious situation brought about by the U.S.A. in Vietnam, I hope that your Government will fulfill its obligation under the Geneva agreements.

....."

BUTTERWORTH

February 4, 1966

STATE to AmConsul HONG KONG 1000, AmEmbassy SAIGON 2254,  
Amembassy OTTAWA 856

".....

"2. Ronning is retired diplomat, born in China and steeped in Sinology. He was most recently Canadian



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High Commissioner in New Delhi and during that time represented Canada at Geneva Conference on Laos. We have long been exposed to his viewpoint, which tends personally to be highly critical of U.S. policy toward Communist China, and particularly to the advocacy of Chinese Communist admission to UN. Moreover, he apparently has long-standing personal ties with both Chou En-lai and Chen Yi, plus fact that his parents are buried in China, so that present visit has some handle in an earlier Chen Yi invitation and in the idea of visiting the graves of his parents.

"3. ...Despite our private misgivings as to his personal views, we have naturally had to say we would have no objection to such visit and indeed could only welcome any constructive initiative....

....."

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

STATE to AmEmbassy OTTAWA 857 (SECRET-EXDIS), 4 Feb 1966

" You should deliver following personal letter to Foreign Minister concerning Ronning visit:

"Dear Paul:

".....

"I must, however, express a shade of concern at the information that we have just had from Walton Butterworth that Ronning's passport will apparently carry the appearance of a formal accreditation as your special emissary with the personal rank of Ambassador....

"I am also more seriously concerned at the possibility that Ronning may find himself engaged in discussion, especially in Peiping, of the problems relating to Chinese representation at the UN and even, if I understand your last conversation with Walton Butterworth correctly, questions of recognition....

".....

"...I think we shall both have a great deal of thinking to do on this subject in the months ahead and I hope that in the first instance we can do it

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on a very confidential basis between ourselves. I have therefore welcomed the indication that you are not discussing the Ronning trip with any other government, and I would end by repeating my hope and assumption that he will be listening only as to any matters other than Vietnam, and that in any event we shall have a full opportunity to talk over with you whatever he picks up in any area.

"With warm regards, Sincerely, Dean Rusk"

(Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

February 7, 1966

AmConsul HONG KONG to SECSTATE 1452 (SECRET-EXDIS), 7 Feb 1966

"We shall do what we can helpfully to influence Ronning's thinking if opportunity presents itself. Incidentally American in Hong Kong who will have fullest opportunity affect his thinking is NY Times correspondent Topping, who is his son-in-law."

RICE

February 24, 1966

STATE to AmEmbassy SAIGON 2512, AmConsul HONG KONG 1086; Info: AmEmbassy OTTAWA 943, AmEmbassy MANILA 1556 (SECRET-EXDIS), 24 Feb 1966

"1. Canadian Embassy has informed Dept. Ronning trip to Peking turned down by Chicoms but accepted by Hanoi. Ronning now in Hong Kong and scheduled go Saigon March 1 leaving for Hanoi March 7 and returning Saigon March 11....

".....

"3. ...Peking turndown of visit made through Chen Yi message to Ronning referring to U.S. actions in Vietnam and GOC support for these which make visit 'inopportune.' Door held open for some future visit, however.

"....."

RUSK (Drafted by P. H. Kreisberg)

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MEMORANDUM to The Secretary from Samuel D. Berger, FE, Subj:  
Chester Ronning Visit to Peking and Hanoi, dated 24 Feb 1966  
(NODIS)

".....

"5. ...Hanoi's willingness and even enthusiasm in agreeing to Ronning's visit results in part from a growing feeling of isolation and in part from a desire to project a more 'positive' foreign policy image. The agreement by the DRV Charge in Moscow to obtain clarification for Lord Chalfont on some points in the DRV position and Hanoi's reversal of its decision last summer not to extend an invitation to Nkrumah to come to North Vietnam may be other aspects of this somewhat looser and more flexible foreign policy. Such a policy, designed to offer a more attractive image of Hanoi to the world at large, was specifically urged by DRV Politburo member Le Duc Tho earlier this month. The change in policy, however, is one of form, not content thus far.

....."

February 25, 1966

AmEmbassy SAIGON to RUEHC/SECSTATE 3100 (SECRET-EXDIS),  
25 Feb 1966

"1. It is true that I know that Mr. Ronning is taking the trip, but it is quite an exaggeration to say that I am 'fully informed of the background of his trip.' I honestly do not feel that I am aware of all the ins and outs and all the implications.

"2. Having in mind the British/North Vietnamese contact in Moscow, I would appreciate knowing of whatever understanding there may be in Washington.

"3. Once again we seem to be getting into direct contacts which affect the future of Vietnam and I do not know what to tell the Vietnamese."

LODGE

STATE to AmEmbassy SAIGON 2525 (SECRET-NODIS), 25 Feb 1966

"Eyes Only for the Ambassador from the Secretary

"Following are my own personal comments about the Ronning visit to Hanoi:

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"Quite frankly, the Canadians themselves seem to be of divided minds about his trip. Ronning has not been helpful on Vietnam and I have no doubt strongly favors recognition of Peiping. Mike Pearson is definitely skeptical about the whole affair but was inclined to go along with Paul Martin's guarded approval for the trip.

"I personally talked to Paul Martin about Ronning and emphasized that it was extremely important that Ronning do nothing to encourage a Hanoi miscalculation about our determination and do nothing to encourage a Hanoi miscalculation about our determination and do nothing to undermine the publicly stated positions of the United States. Martin assured me that he would make that very clear to Ronning.

"Actually, the Ronning trip was originally designed primarily for Peiping and I suspect that the question of recognition and Peiping membership in the UN was most on Ronning's mind. However, Peiping refused to let him come since Canada's attitude toward Vietnam made his visit QTE inopportune UNQTE.

"I can assure you there is no occult understanding between Washington and Ottawa on this matter. If you need to say anything to the South Vietnamese about the Ronning trip, you can tell them that he is on no mission for us, that he has been strongly advised not to say anything or do anything which would encourage Hanoi to believe that their effort will succeed and that his visit should be considered along with such efforts as have been made by many individuals to have a go at Hanoi. Quite frankly, I attach no importance to his trip and expect nothing out of it. At the same time it would be unwise to say anything to GVN which would appear to conflict with Canadian version of trip already given GVN and reported in Deptel 2512, Para 2."

RUSK (Drafted by Rusk)

March 3, 1966

AmEmbassy OTTAWA to SECSTATE 1143 (CONF-EXDIS), 3 Mar 1966

"...Exstaff has put its ICC peace probe on ice,... it is shifting concentration of its peace efforts to Ronning visit to Hanoi next week. ...Ronning is not mediator but explorer."

SCOTT

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AmEmbassy SAIGON to SECSTATE 3178 (SECRET-EXDIS), 3 Mar 1966

"1. Moore (Canadian member ICC) called to present Ambassador Ronning who is on his way to Hanoi.

".....

"3. ...Ronning wished to find out if there was something useful that the ICC could do other than to implement the Geneva accords which have now been so thoroughly violated.

"4. He explained all this to Colonel An, the GVN liaison officer with the ICC, and was planning to tell Tran Van Do about it. An apparently did not object.

"5. ...Moore, who had gone to Hanoi to pave the way for Ronning, said that Hanoi's acceptance of the idea of Ronning's visit was 'immediate.' ...he seemed to think they were worried about the immense casualties which their Army was encountering and would be encountering in South Vietnam.

....."

LODGE

March 15, 1966

AmConGen HONG KONG to SECSTATE 1669 (SECRET-EXDIS), 15 Mar 1966

".....

"2. Results of mission: Ronning characterized results of his mission by quoting old Chinese saying; he had 'travelled ten thousand miles to present a feather.' He said he is more pessimistic about long-range Vietnamese problem than before his trip.

"3. NVN confidence: North Vietnamese leaders he spoke to from Pham Van Dong on down convinced they were winning war, although they concede it will be long struggle. In response my query how NVN expected achieve victory (e.g., by military victory, U.S. loss of determination, GVN collapse), Ronning said NVN views not clear. NVN leaders told him they fully expected stepp-up U.S. military effort, both in South and in bombing of North, including bombing of Hanoi, industries, etc. Explained they had few large industries; small industries being dispersed and plans made for evacuating government offices and populace.

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Ronning commented to me that he did not disabuse NVN leaders of their estimates of increased U.S. military action. Instead, he tried to impress upon them that U.S. could bring vastly greater military power to bear than could the French in 1950's, and that therefore no chance of history repeating itself (as they seemed to believe).

"4. Negotiations: NVN leaders were totally unwilling budge from 'four points.' His remonstrances that strict adherence 'four points' would amount to total American surrender and were therefore unworkable as negotiations formula were greeted with attitude 'that's the American's problem.' Soviet Ambassador, while expressing full support NVN, implied there was somewhat greater possibility for negotiations by telling him that first prerequisite was permanent cessation of bombing of NVN. When Ronning asked why, if this was the case, NVN had made no response during recent bombing pause, Soviet Ambassador said 'they did respond' but refused specify channel or content. Ambassador said resumption of bombing came at just the wrong time and gave Ronning impression resumption had 'loused up' overtures Soviets were making to Hanoi at the time.

"5. Sino-Soviet dispute: NVN leaders attempted downplay importance of dispute and particularly its impact on Vietnam situation. Told him they expected Chicoms to attend CPSU Congress, but claimed they did not know composition delegation.

"6. Geneva Accords. Ronning said both GVN and NVN leaders talked of return to Geneva Accords but in completely different terms. GVN leaders stressed provisions for withdrawal of NVN and VC forces, and claimed that reunification would eventually come through 'disintegration' of communist control in north. NVN leaders stressed elections and claimed they were confident election results would pave way to early reunification.

"7. Ronning's treatment: Ronning found that as a Canadian he treated better than British who support American position fully, but made politely aware that Canada little more than American satellite. However Pham Van Dong appreciative of Pearson's public statement of regret over resumption of bombing in north. Ronning found his several hours of talks with Hanoi leaders very wearing and frustrating with conversations

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wandering down blind alleys and always returning to same intransigent dead end. He got impression he was object of team effort at wearing him down, as long, hard hours of conversation with one group of officials would soon be followed, with little rest, by another session with fresh team. Some talks also scheduled in early morning with scarcely fifteen minutes notice, apparently to keep him off balance. He was in constant company of protocol cadre (with whom he could converse in Chinese) and interpreter.

"8. Impressions of Hanoi: People adequately clothed and fed. Ronning made special point of visiting market and found rice, fish, meat and vegetables in seemingly good supply. Only stall with line of people in front was selling flour. (He could not tell whether it was Canadian or not, but noticed word 'flour' in English on bag.) Streets were practically empty at night, and Ronning was told that many oldsters, youth, and cadre dependents had been evacuated.

"9. Ho Chi Minh out of sight: Ho, an old acquaintance of Ronning's sent apologies explaining that round of meetings in connection with forthcoming Soviet Congress left no time to see him. It rumoured in Hanoi that Ho planning attend Congress.

"10. Chinese also not in evidence: with exception of banquet room full of Chinese cultural troupers in Sun Yat Sen suits, Ronning saw no Chinese in Hanoi.. Chicom Embassy personnel invited to reception given by North Vietnamese his honor did not show up.

....."

ARMSTRONG

March 20, 1966

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION; Subject: Ronning Visit: Hanoi;  
Participants: Canadian Ambassador Chester Ronning, Canadian Ambassador Charles S. A. Ritchie, Embassy of Canada, Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs William P. Bundy, Mr. Michael Shenstone, Counselor, Embassy of Canada, Mr. Paul H. Kreisberg, OIC, Mainland China Affairs, ACA.

"1. Ambassador Ronning passed the attached memorandum to Mr. Bundy, which summarizes his principal meetings in Hanoi.

ATTACHMENT QUOTE

Accompanied by Mr. V. C. Moore, Canadian

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Commissioner, I.C.S.C., Mr. Chester Ronning visited Hanoi from March 7 to 11, as a Special Representative of the Canadian Government.

Mr. Ronning's instructions were to present Prime Minister Pearson's reply to Ho Chi Minh's letter of January 24, and to discuss with the North Vietnamese authorities the conditions in which they would envisage a negotiated settlement in Vietnam, including the possibility of the International Commission playing a helpful good offices role in bringing about or facilitating such negotiations. His primary objective was to obtain, if possible, authoritative clarification of the conditions enunciated by the Hanoi Government as required elements in a negotiated settlement.

Ronning was received by, and had discussions with, Vice Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh, Col. Ha Van Lau, Chief of the PAVN Mission in charge of liaison with the I.C.S.C., and, on the last day of the visit, Prime Minister Pham Van Dong. This final interview lasted for two hours.

All the discussions were marked, on the North Vietnamese side, by repeated emphasis on the necessary acceptance of the 'Four Points' as the only basis on which a peaceful settlement could be approached, and by an apparent uncompromising belief in the ultimate 'victory' of their cause.

The early part of the interview with Pham Van Dong revealed these same obdurate attitudes, and seemed to suggest that there would be no deviation by the Prime Minister from the determined, confident, hard-line approach registered by the others in previous discussions. Towards the end of the interview, however, and under persistent questioning by Ronning about the conditions Hanoi would require to have met before entering into direct or indirect talks with the U.S.A., the Prime Minister gave the following indication: North Vietnamese willingness to enter into some form of preliminary contact hinges on a commitment by the U.S.A. to cease 'bombing and all acts of war against North Vietnam' 'unconditionally and for good'.

In reply to questioning he made it clear that this condition was limited to North Vietnamese territory and did not encompass U.S. military activity in the South.

It was not clear whether the commitment envisaged by Pham Van Dong was to be given publicly, or diplomatically.



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(The translator used the term 'declaration'.) Furthermore, while Pham Van Dong conveyed the impression that Hanoi's response to such a move by the U.S.A. would lead to negotiating contacts, he gave no clarification of whether he envisaged these as being direct or indirect. He said: 'In fact, our position includes many aspects. In brief, we can say that informal talks and a cessation of attacks against North Vietnam go together.'

He did intimate, however, that he was soliciting a U.S. response, and a further exchange with the U.S.A. through Canadian channels. 'For our part', Pham Van Dong said, 'we will look into the attitude of the U.S.A., and with all understanding.'

It was agreed that what had been said to Ronning would be conveyed to the U.S.A., as a Canadian understanding of the North Vietnamese position, and not on the basis of a request by North Vietnam to do so. It was also understood that Canada was not volunteering to act as a mediator.

Emphasis was laid on the importance of absolute secrecy in any exchange that might develop from Ronning's discussions. Earlier feelers had become public and the North Vietnamese had been forced to issue a denial.  
ATTACHMENT END QUOTE

"2. He noted that in contrast to Saigon where he had operated completely under the ICC cloak, Hanoi was anxious that his visit there not be under ICC auspices. On his arrival he was escorted into the city separately from Victor Moore, the Canadian ICC representative in Hanoi.

"3. Ronning found the Vice Foreign Minister, the Foreign Minister and ICC Liaison Officer, Col. Han Van Lao all equally hard and uncompromising on negotiations. All insisted on the US acceptance of the '4 points', the role of the NLF as 'sole representative of the people of South Vietnam', etc. Col. Han Van Lao said that the DRV wanted the ICC to continue but emphasized it was important that it make the proper findings. No findings at all were preferable to bad ones.

"4. Ronning said he tried in all his conversations to argue that it was a mistake to believe the Americans were like the French and could be driven out by military means. He said that all the Vietnamese took a 'black and white' view: the Americans were wrong and the DRV was 'right'. The Foreign Minister and other subordinate officials said they expected the US to destroy Hanoi and Haiphong. They were

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evacuating women, children, dispersing Government offices and factories, and were prepared to fight to the end. The United States, they said, could never crush an agricultural society like that of North Vietnam.

"5. Officials below the Prime Minister also were critical of Canada for being an American 'satellite'.

"6. Ronning's last substantive conversation was with Prime Minister Pham Van Dong. Until nearly the end of his conversation, he was as rigid as his subordinates. In response to a question from Ronning inquiring whether there was nothing which could be done, Pham Van Dong said that the DRV would be prepared to have talks with the United States if the latter declared an unconditional and permanent halt to its bombings of North Vietnam. In response to a request for clarification, Pham Van Dong said he was not referring to military action in the South, only in the North. He added at this point, however, that this had already been included in the January 4, 1966 Foreign Ministry Statement and was not new. He agreed in response to Ronning's request to provide Ronning with an aide memoire on talks following a permanent halt in bombings. Subsequently Ronning was told by an aide to Pham Van Dong that there had been a misunderstanding and no aide-memoire would be forthcoming. Ronning said that at no point had an acceptance of the '4 points' been linked to the halt in bombing by Pham Van Dong. Dong asked that the Government of Canada convey this message to the United States and said several times that the DRV wanted to keep a channel open through the Canadians.

"7. Ronning said he had asked Dong why the DRV hadn't talked to the United States during the last 'pause'. Dong said they had (the Soviet Ambassador made this same point). Pham Van Dong had also tossed off the Sino-Soviet conflict as merely a 'difference of opinion' and had emphasized both were friends of the DRV and would help defend the security of a socialist country.

"8. Pham Van Dong concluded by observing that the Canadians were 'men of good will' and while 'good will' doesn't matter much, one should use it when one can.

"9. Dong accepted Prime Minister Pearson's letter to Ho Chi Minh but expressed regret that Ho was too busy to see Ronning. Dong said the Chinese Communists would go to Moscow for the 23rd CPSU Congress and that Chou En-lai would probably lead the delegation. (Ambassador Ritchie said Ambassador Dobrynin had told him Chou would not be going to Moscow.)

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"10. Ronning expressed his personal opinion that the offer of talks for a complete halt to bombing was separate from the '4 points' but added that, on balance, he frankly did not himself think anything significant had emerged from his visit.

"11. Mr. Bundy observed that the Hanoi ploy was clever; since the bombing question had in the past (including Ho Chi Minh's January 24 letter) been linked publicly with the '4 points', acceptance of the DRV offer implied acceptance of the '4 points.' He said Pham Van Dong's remarks would, however, call for some careful consideration. To Mr. Bundy's question as to whether Pham Van Dong had discussed the role of the NLF in negotiations, Ronning said he had not and suggested Hanoi wanted to avoid discussing matters that pertained directly to the South."

March 31, 1966

Memorandum (SECRET/EXDIS); To: FE - Mr. Bundy; From: ACA - Harold W. Jacobson; Subject: EXDIS Response to Pham Van Dong's Remarks to Ronning.

.....

"2. According to Ronning's account, the only concrete proposal made to him in Hanoi was Pham Van Dong's last minute suggestion that DRV willingness to enter preliminary talks with us 'hinges' on the question of our declaration of an unconditional and permanent halt to the bombing of North Vietnam. We could hardly respond positively on this; we could, at best, only seek further information. Therefore, instead of responding directly to the Ronning message, Paul suggested, and David Dean and I concur, that the EXDIS Aide Memoire sent to the DRV through Rangoon, February 16, be resubmitted to the DRV through the Canadians in the course of their routine travels to Hanoi. At the same time we could request the Canadians to add the following oral comment: 'A representative of the US would be prepared to discuss the question of talks leading toward a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Vietnam at any time. The proposal by the North Vietnamese Premier that the US permanently and completely halt such bombings could, of course, be among the subjects for discussion in such a meeting.'"

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April 22, 1966

Department of State Memorandum for the File.

"Mr. Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Canada, called at 9:05 AM from Ottawa, to speak to Mr. William Bundy.

. . . . .

". . . . His main concern was the long interval - the Canadians had had some word from 'Asia' to the effect that they too are concerned about the length of time [since the last visit.] Mr. Martin said he felt very strongly indeed that they had to go back with something - even nothing - even something contrived.

"Mr. Bundy said that any response would not be contrived on our side; that he had reviewed a proposed message to the Canadian Government just yesterday and had mentioned previously to Ambassador Ritchie that we did not feel that it would be a propitious thing to move 'while things are at white heat.'

"Mr. Martin replied that he appreciated that, but felt that what we had to do was establish with 'these people' the notion - quite genuine on the Canadian side - that we want to do something and that we are really trying. He stated that the potentiality of this matter cannot be minimized.

. . . . .

"Mr. Bundy said we would couch our memorandum in such terms that it would be up to the Canadians just how our message would be conveyed."

. . . . .

(Drafted by B. M. Moore)

Department of State Memorandum for the Secretary (through S/S);  
Subject: Pending Vietnam Matters, dated 22 April 1966.

. . . . .

". . . Paul Martin is very anxious for a prompt response on the Ronning approach. We still do not see much in it but plainly our relations with Paul Martin alone would dictate as forthcoming a response as we can make. I have drafted a reply. . . ."

. . . . .

William P. Bundy

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April 26, 1966

MEMORANDUM TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

"1. The Department of State has carefully studied the memorandum provided by Ambassador Chester Ronning following his trip to Hanoi on March 7-11, and has further considered Ambassador Ronning's personal report to Mr. Bundy on his visit on March 20. . . .

"2. We agree that the Canadian channel to Hanoi that this approach has provided should be kept open, and have refrained from proposing a reply up to this point because of the political crisis in Saigon. To have approached Hanoi in these circumstances seemed to us unwise.

"3. As the Canadian Government is aware, a direct channel between the United States Government and Hanoi was opened in Rangoon during the period of the recent bombing suspension. . . . the record stands that a direct channel has been opened, but that Hanoi chooses for the time being not to employ it.

"4. Against this background, and in the light of repeated North Vietnamese statements insisting upon the acceptance of the so-called 'Four Points' before any discussions or negotiations--and insisting that the US demonstrate such acceptance by 'concrete acts' such as the unequivocal and permanent cessation of bombing of the North--the USG is unable to evaluate the message conveyed to Mr. Ronning as indicating any real 'give' in Hanoi's position. We understand that Prime Minister Pham Van Dong reiterated the DRV's 'four points,' but at the close of the conversation suggested or hinted that Hanoi might be prepared to enter into discussions if the US would declare a permanent cessation of bombing attacks on the North. It seems most probable that this was still intended to be linked with acceptance of the 'four points,' although a contrary interpretation is conceivable. In any event, it should of course be clear that the U.S.G. could not accept a unilateral cessation of this form of military activity without some reciprocal action of the North Vietnamese side involving its infiltration of men and equipment into the South and perhaps also the overall level of military activity in the South.

"5. In the circumstances, the U.S.G. believes that a message should be conveyed to Hanoi--either through the regular Canadian ICC representatives, or, if desired, Ambassador Ronning--which would explore the meaning of the North Vietnamese suggestion as far as possible and reiterate US willingness to pursue the matter further through the established direct channel. The Canadian channel might continue to be used in the event of a

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forthcoming response. In view of the complexity of the issues that would be involved in any true reciprocal reduction of hostilities, it would be the US hope, however, that if Hanoi were interested, the matter would be pursued directly as soon as possible. Specifically, the USG suggests that an oral message along the following lines be conveyed in Hanoi at the appropriate level:

TEXT

"A. The Canadian Government has conveyed to the USG the views expressed by Prime Minister Pham Van Dong to Ambassador Chester Ronning on March 11. The reaction of the USG indicated that it could not accept the apparent suggestion that the USG must agree to a permanent cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam as a unilateral and non-reciprocated pre-condition to the holding of discussions. The Canadian Government knows, from the public and private statements of US representatives, that the US is itself prepared for discussions or negotiations without any preconditions whatever, and that it would also be prepared to consider a reciprocal reduction in hostilities in Vietnam, which could include the question of the bombing of North Vietnam. However, action concerning the latter, as the Canadian Government understands the US view, could not be undertaken unilaterally in the absence of reciprocal measures by North Vietnam. The Canadian Government is confident the USG would be interested in any indication the DRV was interested in such reciprocal actions, and of what sort. Moreover, interest was expressed by the USG as to whether the remarks of Prime Minister Pham Van Dong indicated the possibility that mutual and reciprocal reductions in military activity might in themselves serve to create the possibility for holding of discussions or talks.

"B. The Canadian Government is assured that the USG would be prepared at any time to discuss directly and in fullest confidence the respective positions of the USG and the North Vietnamese Government and the possible means of reconciling these positions and moving toward a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam conflict.

"C. The Canadian Government knows that the US would be interested in any response, or any indication of its position in any respect, that the Government of North Vietnam might wish to communicate to the Government of Canada."

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April 26, 1966

Amembassy OTTAWA 1443 to SecState (SECRET/NODIS).

"1. I delivered the memorandum contained in reftel to  
Extaff Min Martin. . . .

. . . .

"3. Martin . . . said that he had been concerned that  
delay on our part might call into question Canada's 'credibility'  
and this was the reason why 'in the absence of Dean and you and  
Charles Ritchie' he had 'impulsively picked up the telephone' and  
called Bundy. He went on to say that the U.S. had been assured that  
nothing that was in our national interest to know would be withheld;  
nevertheless GOC did have important information of which it was  
the sole possessor. . . ."

BUTTERWORTH

April 30, 1966

Oral Message (Final Draft)

"A. The Canadian Government has conveyed to the United  
States Government the views expressed by Prime Minister Pham  
Van Dong to Ambassador Chester Ronning on March 11 . . . .

"B. The Canadian Government told the United States  
Government that, on the basis of the impressions gained by  
Ambassador Chester Ronning, the D.R.B.N. would be prepared  
to have informal talks if there were an unconditional under-  
taking by the United States to cease bombing and all acts of  
war against North Vietnam. The reaction of the United States  
Government indicated that it could not accept a suggestion in  
these terms, that is to say, that it must agree to a permanent  
cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam as a unilateral and  
non-reciprocated precondition to the holding of discussions.

"C. The Canadian Government knows, from the public and  
private statements of U.S. representatives, that the United  
States is itself prepared to engage in discussions or negoti-  
ations without preconditions. If this could not be done on  
the North Vietnamese side without preconditions involving the  
question of halting the bombing of North Vietnam, the Canadian  
Government understands that the United States would be prepared  
to proceed towards talks on the basis of a reciprocal reduction  
in hostilities in Vietnam of which a cessation of the bombing  
of North Vietnam would be one element. The Canadian Government  
is confident that the United States Government would be interested

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in any indication that the D.R.V.N. was prepared to consider such a reciprocal reduction in hostilities and, if so, of what sort. The Canadian Government also believes that the United States Government would be prepared to contemplate the possibility of a mutual and reciprocal reduction in military activity. This might in itself serve to create the possibility for the holding of discussions or talks.

"D. The Canadian Government knows that the United States would be interested in any response, or any indication of its position in any respect, that the Government of North Vietnam might wish to communicate to the Government of Canada.

"E. The United States Government are interested in seeing the Canadian channel kept open. The Canadian Government is also assured that the United States Government would be prepared at any time to discuss directly and in fullest confidence the respective positions of the United States Government and the North Vietnamese Government and the possible means of reconciling these positions and moving toward a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam conflict."

May 2, 1966

MEMORANDUM (SECRET/NODIS); To: Mr. Bundy; From: Paul H. Kreisberg;  
Subject: Ronning II

"The draft Canadian oral message based upon our April 26th memorandum to the GOC seems to me to be essentially satisfactory and to accurately reflect the spirit of our original memorandum. . . ."

. . . . .

May 5, 1966

Note to the Secretary (SECRET/NODIS)

"Ambassador Waller (Australia) came to see me this afternoon and asked point blank about what Chester Ronning was up to. In the circumstances, I decided that the only thing to do was to tell him frankly the situation. I therefore said that Ronning had been up in Hanoi in March and had talked to Pham Van Dong, who had reiterated the four points but then had thrown out a teasing suggestion that they might be prepared to talk if we agreed to stop the bombing. I said that we had sat on this message during the recent political troubles, but were now prepared to authorize the Canadians (I did not specify whether it would be Ronning himself) to go back and say that we were interested in whether Hanoi had really meant to say that it no longer insisted on the four points and was talking only of a



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cessation of bombing, and secondly that if this was the suggestion we could not accept it on a unilateral basis but would have to know what Hanoi proposed to do itself. . . ."

. . . .

William P. Bundy

May 9, 1966

Department of State, Note to the Secretary (SECRET/NODIS)

"Walt Rostow heard from the Ranch today that the President has indicated that if you wish we may give Ottawa approval of the attached revised Ronning oral message to Hanoi without checking back with him, but the President asked whether we might not have to override this political initiative with a more far-reaching one if we take the air action against NVN now being pressed by DOD.

"Under these circumstances, do you wish the revised draft to be given to the Canadians at this time?"

Benjamin H. Read

May 15, 1966

STATE 1219 to Amembassy OTTAWA (SECRET/NODIS)

. . . .

"5. We would prefer that Ronning . . . make the following points:

(a) He understands that the ICRC in accordance with its traditional neutrality and independence stands ready to make its services available to prisoners on both sides of this conflict. . . .

. . . .

(c) He has reason to believe that the U.S. would be prepared to discuss arrangements for a possible release or exchange of these prisoners, either through the Red Cross, or through another intermediary, or directly. North Vietnamese receptivity to such a move would be an important step toward lessening of tension.

"6. We would not want Ronning to raise the issue of 'war

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crimes trials', partly because there are recent indications that Hanoi does not intend to go through with its threat to try these men. . . ."

RUSK (Drafted by F. A. Sieverts)

May 24, 1966

SAIGON TT External 42 Immed DE DELHI

"Following is text of Hanoi Tel CH141 May 21: Begins: For Commissioner only from Donahue QUOTE Was requested to attend mtg with Van Lau today at 1830 hours. After brief exchange of pleasantries he got right down to business.. He gave us well rehearsed summary of the Vietnam situation, reaffirming time and again that the USA and her satellites were cause of the present situation. He stated that in spite of world opinion condemning her policy, the USA was intensifying and expanding the war.

"2. QUOTE At the end of this talk he said he did not rpt not have a let to give me but he did give me an Aide Memoire which laid out the point of view of his Govt. I am enclosing full text of this note. He requested that I bring the point of view of his Govt. to your attn as well as their views on the proposals made by our PM on May 2. He emphasized this last point.

"3. QUOTE Following is full text of note QUOTE Par A1 - Everybody knows that the deep root and the immed cause of the present serious situation in Vietnam lie in the USA policy of intervention and aggression. At present, the USA Govt. keep sending more USA and satellite troops to South Vietnam in an attempt to intensify and expand its war of aggression there, at the same time freniedly QUOTE escalating UNQUOTE its air war against the DRVN evilly committing countless crimes against the Vietnamese people. So far it has refused to recognize the four-point stand of the Govt. of the DRVN and to recognize the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation as the sole genuine rep of the people of South Vietnam. It is obvious that the USA policy of aggression vis-a-vis Vietnam remains unchanged. 2. The Govt. of the DRVN once again affirms that if the USA Govt. really desires a peaceful settlement it must recognize the four-point stand of the DRVN Govt., prove this by actual deeds; it must announce a definitive and unconditional end to its air raids and all other actions of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Only then will it be possible to envisage

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a political solution to the Vietnam problem. 3. According to recent reports from Western news agencies, on May, 1966 the CDN PM came out with a proposal or measure for a settlement of the Vietnam problem. It is to be regretted that this proposal conforms neither to the fundamental provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam, nor to the actual situation in Vietnam. It makes no rpt no distinction between the USA which is the aggressor and the Vietnamese people who are the victims of aggression fighting in self-defence. It does not rpt not meet the four-point stand of the DRVN Govt. However, out of good will, we consider that Mr. Ronning's visit to Hanoi may be agreed to as proposal by the CDN Govt. The timing of the visit will be intimated in due course. Hanoi May 21/66 UNQUOTE.

. . . . .

MOORE

June 3, 1966

OTTAWA 1635 to SecState (SECRET/NODIS)

"1. GOC learned today that Ronning mission acceptable to Hanoi in mid-June, so Ronning expected fly to Hanoi from Saigon on ICC aircraft June 14 and return June 18.

. . . . .

"3. Extstaff has queried whether Dept. has any comment for it on that section of John Finney article in NY Times of June 3 which stated that USG QUOTE has sent a new message to Hanoi pledging willingness to cease bombing if NVN, under some form of international verification, stops infiltrating troops into SVN. These diplomatic overtures have been conveyed to Peking and Hanoi in recent days through diplomatic channels and through private, informal meetings by individuals who were understood to know administration thinking. END QUOTE."

BUTTERWORTH

June 6, 1966

SAIGON 5312 to SecState (SECRET/NODIS)

"1. It would be less disturbing if Canadians were to leave informing GVN about Ronning mission to US. However we recognize this might not satisfy Canadians, and that may be behind their offer to clear their approach in advance. . . . .

. . . . .

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"3. We, of course, will . . . . use argument that Canadians wished to pursue matter, we had no wish to discourage them, and while we do not expect results we will keep GVN informed."

LODGE

June 8, 1966

BRUSSELS SECTO 87 to SecState (TOP SECRET/NODIS); Eyes Only for Secretary McNamara from Secretary Rusk.

"Reference your telegram on Ronning, you may have seen by telegram to the President. I am deeply disturbed by general international revulsion, and perhaps a great deal at home, if it becomes known that we took an action which sabotaged the Ronning mission to which we had given our agreement. I recognize agony of this problem for all concerned. We could make arrangements to get an immediate report from Ronning. If he has a negative report, as we expect, that provides a firmer base for the action we contemplate and would make a difference to people like Wilson and Pearson. If, on the other hand, he learns that there is any serious breakthrough toward peace, the President would surely want to know of that before an action which would knock such a possibility off the tracks. I strongly recommend therefore against ninth or tenth. I regret this because of my maximum desire to support you and your colleagues in your tough job."

RUSK

June 8, 1966

SAIGON 5379 to SecState (SECRET/NODIS)

Section one of two.

. . . .

"2. Moore then launched into a long talk full of miscellaneous items about what he has picked up in North Viet-Nam, as follows:

"3. The North Vietnamese Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs had told Moore that the Ia Pira peace feeler had been genuine, but the Hanoi regime had had to denounce it when the leak came.

"4. Moore was very emphatic on the danger of leaks, and, in fact, on the whole danger of talking a great deal and having a lot

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of publicity about peace feelers. He said that Hanoi have 'played ball' as regards keeping quiet on the first Ronning trip, and he believed they would do so this time.

"5. In particular, he deplores a U.S. statement which he said was made by McCloskey on June 3, which gave in public almost exactly what the substance was of what the Canadians were planning to say in private. . . .

. . . .

LODGE

Section two of two.

"12. . . . . On the matter of a public statement explaining the reason for the Ronning trip, he said it was clear that Hanoi did not like any talk about 'a new role for the Commission' and that would not be used as an explanation.

"13. Moore agrees with his Polish colleague that there is a 'will to talk' in Hanoi and cited the receptiveness to the suggestion that Ronning could come as an illustration.

"14. He talked a good deal about conversations which he had had with Ha Van Lau, the Hanoi regime's liaison man with the ICC, and honorary colonel and a professional French-trained civil servant. Lau said: 'The U.S. must show its sincerity by its deeds.' At a number of dinners and lunches, where he constantly ran into Lau, the conversation always was on Lau's part and the other guests around him: 'How can this war be ended?' Lau often discussed reunification, with discussions running something like this: 'After the fighting stops, there should be a fairly long interval, during which the status quo continues with the two countries divided at the 17th parallel, depending on the circumstances. After that, it would be possible to see whether there were some changed ideas in Saigon and Hanoi.' But, Moore said, implicit in everything that Lau said was that the NLF was the only legitimate group and would, of course, have to be the government of South Viet-Nam."

. . . .

LODGE

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June 15, 1966

STATE 3563 to Amembassy TOKYO (TOP SECRET/NODIS); Literally Eyes  
Only for Ambassador from Secretary

"1. As you know from discussion at Baguio meeting, we have had under continuing consideration the possibility of bombing key POL installations in DRV, notably Haiphong and Hanoi installations, which are just outside city limits and in areas where we believe civilian casualties can be kept to extremely low figures under the prescribed operating rules of good weather and daylight operations. Operation would involve total of roughly seven targets and could be conducted in two good weather days, although the likelihood of good weather and effective attack may be such as to cause it to stretch for four days or more.

". . . . Assuming that the operation were to be conducted between now and early July, we request your personal assessment as to the level of Japanese reaction to be anticipated and the attitude GOJ might take. . . .

. . . .

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

STATE to Amembassy VIENTIANE 802; Info: Amembassy OTTAWA 1341 and  
Amembassy SAIGON 3911 (SECRET/NODIS)

. . . .

"2. . . . your arrangement with Maclellan to see him June 18 is exactly right. You should find occasion to re-confirm this meeting and to make absolutely sure you see Ronning soonest as he returns."

. . . .

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

Department of State Memorandum of Conversation (SECRET); Subject:  
Ronning Visit; Participants: Mr. Michael Shenstone, Counselor,  
Canadian Embassy; Mr. Leonard Unger, Deputy Assistant Secretary for  
Far Eastern Affairs.

"1. . . . Moore recounted a conversation of Ronning  
(and himself, presumably) with a senior DRV Foreign Ministry

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official who said that there will be no DRV press release on the Ronning visit this time and he hoped that the Canadians would likewise make no public statement. The official went on to say that his Government presumes that Peking knows about the Ronning visit but the DRV nevertheless wished to avoid the added affront that might be given by its being publicly announced. Moore speculated that an added factor might be that Ho Chi Minh might still be present in Peking. . . ."

. . . .

June 15, 1966

LONDON, JUNE 15 (REUTERS)

"Prime Minister Harold Wilson hinted today that another peace initiative in Vietnam might be made soon.

"The Prime Minister said a mission to Hanoi last year by junior Minister Harold Davies was greatly harmed by premature publicity.

"I shall be careful to say nothing today,' Wilson told a meeting of his parliamentary labor party. 'This does not mean that there will be none.'

"Diplomatic observers in London thought Wilson may have been referring to the mission of special Canadian Envoy Chester Ronnings.

"Officials in Ottawa today said Ronning was now in Hanoi on his second mission since March."

. . . .

June 17, 1966

STATE to Amembassy VIENTIANE 805; Info: Amembassy OTTAWA 1349 and Amembassy SAIGON 3943. Eyes Only for Charge.

"In your conversation with Ronning, if he should give negative reading, you should inquire particularly whether he is making immediate cable report to his government in this sense."

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

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June 17, 1966

OTTAWA 1710 to SecState (SECRET/NODIS)

.....

"Martin said he had given Ronning instructions to be very careful, depending on what he comes out with, about what he tells our people in Vientiane. He is instructed in any case to send a full report as promptly as possible to Martin himself. . . ."

.....

SCOTT

June 18, 1966

SAIGON 5628 to SecState (SECRET/NODIS)

"Moore has more than clammed up. He regrets he is under strict instructions not rpt not to talk to us until he reports to Ottawa. . . . His instructions provide that Ottawa will do the talking. . . ."

LODGE

VIENTIANE 1335 to SecState; Info: Ottawa 98 and Saigon 654 (SECRET/NODIS)

"1. . . . I was unable see Ronning during his brief stopover here this morning. Maclellan apparently received two days ago categorical instructions from Ottawa that Ronning was to see no one rpt no one on his return from Hanoi. . . ."

.....

SWANK

June 20, 1966

OTTAWA 1722 to SecState

.....

"2. Martin said his primary reason for wanting to see



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Kreisberg first was to emphasize his grave concern that any escalation in military action in Vietnam by U.S. in immediate future would jeopardize Canadian good faith with Hanoi and make it appear U.S. used Ronning as means of obtaining negative readout on negotiations which would justify escalation."

. . . . .

SCOTT

June 21, 1966

OTTAWA to SecState 1740 FLASH (SECRET/EXDIS); For Secretary from Bundy.

. . . . .

"2. Basically, Hanoi turned Ronning down cold on their paying any price whatever for the cessation of bombing. It is Ronning's impression that they understood his message to relate to preliminary talks of the character that we had had in Rangoon. In other words, Hanoi appeared to Ronning to be saying that they would not even talk to us in this fashion unless we agreed to cease bombing totally on their terms, without any reciprocal action on their part.

"3. Ronning thinks Hanoi had hoped he was bringing something more forthcoming than our familiar position calling for reduction of hostilities to be reciprocal. DRV Reps did refer specifically to our June 3 spokesman's statement on this subject, which of course had simply repeated the position we had stated many times, most specifically in our reply to the British last August. Martin this afternoon gave me no hint of recrimination because of our having repeated this position publicly, but this remains a potentially troublesome point that he may raise this evening.

"4. Having covered the question of conditions for preliminary talks, Ronning went on to have a general discussion of the conditions under which there might be QTE a cease-fire and negotiations UNQTE. The DRV foreign minister dealt very generally with this subject, but the total DRV comment appeared to add up to there being a satisfactory prior understanding, before QTE negotiations UNQTE, as to (1) our recognition of the status of the NLF (not spelled out); (2) return of (sic) the 1954 Agreements; (3) withdrawal of U.S. forces (not specified whether this must take place prior to negotiations or as to the

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ultimate result); (4) the four points. Ronning did not get into detail on these questions, but the litany sounds familiar.

"5. The only conceivable sign of life in all the conversations is that the DRV Reps did say categorically that acceptance of the four points was not repeat not a necessary condition to preliminary talks. The only condition for such preliminary talks in our unilateral cessation of bombing. However, as I have noted above, this appears to relate only to resumption of Rangoon-type contact, and as to any substantive negotiations the four points are still in the picture. I conclude that the result is clearly negative and I hope to confirm more categorically tonight that Pearson and Martin accept this. I also expect to get into the question of what they will be saying in their Parliament. My own thought is that they might say that Ronning was seeking on Canadian initiative to see whether a basis could be established for talks among the interested parties. His conclusion was that no such basis as yet existed. This kind of formula would avoid Martin's saying what the positions were or whether he agreed with the American position, which I surmise he would be reluctant to do."

BUTTERWORTH

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION (SECRET/EXDIS); Subject: Visit of Ambassador Ronning to Hanoi, June 14-17, 1966; Participants: Canada: The Honorable Paul Martin, Minister of External Affairs; Ambassador Chester Ronning, Government of Canada; Mr. Ralph Collins, Under Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs; Mr. Claus Goldschlag, Director of Far Eastern Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs; Mr. Thomas Delworth, Vietnam Desk Officer, Ministry of External Affairs. United States: Mr. William P. Bundy, Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs; Minister Joseph W. Scott, American Embassy, Ottawa; Mr. Paul H. Kreisberg, OIC, Mainland China Affairs, FE/ACA.

"1. Ambassador Ronning said that he was met on his arrival in Hanoi by Le Thanh, Director of the North American Division of the DRV Foreign Ministry. He was greeted warmly and given the best suite in the Government's guest house in Hanoi, considerably better accommodations than he had had during his first visit in March. The evening of the same day, June 14, Le Thanh gave a small dinner party for Ambassador Ronning at which he subjected Ronning to a continuous hard line presentation of the DRV position throughout the evening. Ronning said that he had not paid much attention to Le Thanh's remarks in view of his relatively junior status.

"2. The next day, June 15, Ronning was received by Vice Foreign Minister Nguyen Go Thach. Ambassador Ronning conveyed

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to Thach the oral message with which he had been provided by the US Government and requested that Thach pass it on to his superiors in the DRV Government. Thach agreed to do so but gave his personal opinion that it was doubtful a favorable response would be forthcoming. . . .

"3. Later in the afternoon of June 15, Ronning saw PAVN ICC liaison officer, Col. Ha Van Lao. Ha analyzed at great length the Vietnamese situation--both North and South--emphasizing that the North Vietnamese were prepared to resist indefinitely, that no matter how much the U.S. increased its efforts the North Vietnamese had the ability to deal with the situation, and that the US would inevitably be defeated in South Vietnam. He claimed the Viet Cong were winning everywhere and that recent South Vietnam political difficulties proved the US did not have the confidence of the people. He also said criticisms of US policy in the US, specifically referring to Senator Fulbright and Walter Lippmann, also proved that there was a lack of American confidence in President Johnson. He said, however, that the DRV was not counting on US opinion to win but on the strength of 'the Vietnamese people themselves.'

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"5. On the third day, June 16, Ambassador Ronning saw the highest official to whom he was given access on this trip, Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh, who, however, received him in his concomitant capacity as Vice Premier. Trinh said that the US oral message had been considered and that the North Vietnamese had been disappointed that Ronning had brought a reply similar to newspaper reports with which the DRV was already familiar. He said there was nothing in the Ronning message that the DRV had not already considered and accused the Canadians of joining with the US in another 'peace offensive'. He said he had considered the Canadians to be sincere and to have had good will which was why they had accepted the offer of good offices by the Government of Canada. He rejected as impossible, however, any suggestion that the DRV pay a price for a halt of US bombing of North Vietnam. (Ronning's interpreter told him the next morning that part of the reason the US proposal had been rejected was that the DRV could not permit the US to believe it was so concerned about US bombing that it would pay a price for its halt.) He furthermore charged that the US had been escalating the war since Ronning's last visit in March and asked how it was possible for Ronning to be in Vietnam 'negotiating' while this was going on. Ronning denied that he was engaging in 'negotiations' but was simply trying to discover whether there were any mutually acceptable bases on which movement toward a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam conflict might be made. Ronning asked Trinh whether his remarks meant that the March DRV proposal was now being withdrawn. Trinh said

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it was not and that if the US was willing to accept the original DRV proposal, the DRV was prepared to 'talk'. Ronning further asked whether, if the DRV concluded that the GOC was insincere and that it lacked confidence in Canadian good will and efforts to contribute to an honorable settlement, there was any point in continuing the discussions further and in keeping the 'Canadian' channel open. Trinh again expressed regret that Ronning's presentation to Vice Foreign Minister Thach had showed 'lack of appreciation' of the DRV position but added that it was the US attitude to which the DRV objected primarily and that the North Vietnamese wished to keep the door open through the Canadians for any further developments.

"6. Ronning asked Trinh whether the DRV could put forward any new counter-proposal. He inquired, as an example, as to the possibility of an over-all settlement including a ceasefire throughout Vietnam. Trinh said 'This all depends on the US attitude'. Aside from halting its bombing of North Vietnam, which must be done before any talks could be held, the US would have to 'recognize the NLF position,' abide by the terms of the 1954 Geneva Agreements, and withdraw its forces and bases from South Vietnam.

"7. Ronning said that Trinh had referred to the NLF 'Five Points' as among those elements which would have to be accepted by the US but was ambiguous as to whether this would be part of the discussions leading toward an armistice or of a final settlement. He said that he had clarified specifically with both Thach and Trinh that acceptance of the DRV 'Four Points' and a cessation of fighting in South Vietnam were not preconditions for preliminary DRV-US talks. Ronning emphasized the DRV position was that if the US stopped bombing completely, the DRV was prepared to talk.

"8. Trinh did not himself specifically refer to the DRV 'Four Points' per se, although he mentioned individual points in the course of his presentation. (On the day of Ronning's departure, however, Le Thanh of the Foreign Ministry noted specifically to Ronning that the 'Four Points' were also 'an element', one of the problems that would have to be discussed.)

"9. Ronning asked Trinh whether, if the US clarified its position on the NLF, agreed to the withdrawal of its troops, and agreed to abide by the 1954 Geneva Agreements. The DRV would be prepared to enter into negotiations. Trinh said 'It all depended on the US reply, but the current US attitude would have to change.' Ronning emphasized that his entire presentation and all his remarks during this part of the conversation with Trinh were extremely general and that he had not attempted in any way to go into details but merely to try and feel out the general nature of the DRV position.

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"10. On the final day of the trip, June 17, Le Thanh reiterated to Ronning that the DRV had confidence in Canadian sincerity and good will and wished to keep the door open if the Government of Canada had anything to say. Ronning added he replied that, similarly, if the DRV had anything to say it could contact the Canadian representative on the ICC, Moore.

"11. In response to questions asked by others present at Ambassador Ronning's debriefing, Ronning made the following observations which he did not attribute to specific DRV individuals but which he said had been made during his conversations in Hanoi:

a. The North Vietnamese were confident that the US would eventually bomb Hanoi and Haiphong and lay waste much of North Vietnam. They expected this and were prepared for it. He remarked that on June 15, while he was in Hanoi, there had been an air raid alarm which had sent the population scurrying to many shelters which had been built in the city. He thought an observation plane might have been responsible for the alarm and said he had seen no planes (there was a heavy cloud cover) or heard any bombing. He noted that a US plane was said to have been downed in the suburbs of Hanoi a few days before his arrival and that the diplomatic corps had been taken to see the plane and had been given fragments as souvenirs. The Canadian ICC military representative, however, was not permitted to make this 'excursion'.

b. DRV officials told Ronning that Premier Pham Van Dong was not in Hanoi at the time but did not specify where he was. In response to Ronning's own question as to Ho Chi Minh's whereabouts, officials said Ho was not in Communist China and labeled as 'rumors' reports that he was on such a trip. The question of whether he had been in the CPR was not raised.

c. DRV officials on at least one occasion strongly criticized the Government of Canada for its role on the ICC Commission in Laos.

d. Officials had specifically told Ronning that they would attend a Geneva-type conference on Vietnam. (This presumably came up in the context of the general conditions under which the DRV would agree to negotiations) and observed that they would favor French participation in such a conference.

e. No emphasis was placed in the conversations on the subject of 'reunification' but it was raised by DRV officials in the context of observance of the 1954 Geneva Agreements.

f. DRV officials declined to be drawn out by questions on the relationship of the DRV with the Soviets and the Chinese,

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merely reiterating that both supported North Vietnam and were fraternal countries of the DRV.

"12. Minister of External Affairs Martin asked Ambassador Ronning several times to make clear whether there was any ambiguity in his mind as to whether Hanoi was prepared to 'talk' solely on the basis of an end to the US bombing. Ronning was absolutely convinced there was no ambiguity on this point and that he interpreted DRV reference to be to informal bilateral talks with the US, not to formal negotiations or a Geneva-type conference. Mr. Goldschlag summarized the DRV position as Ronning appeared to have garnered it as a three-stage position: (1) an end to US bombing on DRV terms; (2) informal bilateral DRV-US talks; (3) a multilateral Geneva-type conference. Ronning and Martin agreed this was an accurate summation as the Canadians understood it.

"13. In a subsequent private conversation, Ronning told Kreisberg that he had been totally depressed following his conversation with Trinh and that he had not detected any hint on Trinh's part of a desire to put forward any new or alternative proposals which Ronning might bring back.

"14. At the conclusion of the conversation, Mr. Bundy observed that it was very difficult to perceive where there was any 'handle' by which to grab hold of the views expressed by DRV officials to Ambassador Ronning but that the USG would carefully evaluate Ronning's observations as conveyed during the present meeting.

"15. Comment: Ronning's manner and attitude following his June trip to Hanoi was markedly more sober and subdued than it was after his March trip. In March Ronning clearly felt that he may have gotten some hint of a shift in the DRV position which posed the possibility of further hopeful development. He was anxious at that time for the US to consider urgently its evaluation of the DRV line to the GOC so that some further move might be undertaken. At no point during Ronning's remarks following his June trip to Hanoi did he personally hint at any opening or flexibility in the DRV position or that he had emerged from his current mission with any information which required further consideration and might offer the possibility for yet a third effort. Minister of External Affairs Martin, however, repeatedly emphasized on his side that the DRV had agreed to keep open the Canadian channel and that this was important. Ronning did not demur from this position, and in fact agreed that Hanoi had been willing to keep the channel open but offered no encouragement or suggestion as to how it might be used from here on."

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June 22, 1966

Attachment to Memorandum for the Record (SECRET/NODIS); Subject:  
Dinner Meeting with Paul Martin and Other Canadians, June 21, 1966.

I. - The Ronning Mission

"A. It was entirely clear at the dinner that all the Canadian participants accepted that Ronning had found no sign of 'give' in Hanoi's position.

. . . .

"B. While Martin attempted some recriminations in the US handling of the mission, by the close of the discussion we believe these had been dealt with and will not appear in any public discussion by him.

. . . . Martin early in the dinner launched into a complaint that our position had not been forthcoming enough. Mr. Bundy said that we could have taken no other position on a unilateral cessation of bombing, and with this Martin wholly agreed. He then went on to suggest that we might have said something more about the status of the NLF, and Ronning made the suggestion that we might indicate at some point that we were prepared to treat the NLF as a 'belligerent group.' Mr. Bundy argued that any recognition of the NLF as an independent party would prejudice the whole possibility of a stable political settlement in the South and simply could not be contemplated, particularly with the existing political weakness in the South. . . .

Secondly, Martin, and to some degree Ronning, thought that our June 3 press statement on reciprocal reductions of hostilities might have queered the mission. Ronning's account of his mission (covered in Mr. Kreisberg's separate memorandum) had indicated that the DRV representatives had referred to his press statement, and Ronning also thought that they had expected something more forthcoming from his mission. . . . when we had been forced to comment on the Finney leak of June 3 about the Warsaw talks (which Mr. Bundy noted had been forced on us by a Senatorial indiscretion) we were bound to repeat precisely the position that we had always taken, saying that we could consider action concerning the bombing if Hanoi would take reciprocal action, 'for example' relating to infiltration, military activity, and North Vietnamese military personnel in the South. . . .

Thirdly, several of the Canadians wondered what sort of response we might have expected Hanoi to make to the agreed message. On this, Mr. Bundy remarked that we had had one experience with a North Vietnamese contact who had said that we should watch the level of military activity and North Vietnamese military presence in the South. . . .

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. . . . . there was a long discussion of Hanoi's state of mind. Mr. Bundy expressed the view that Hanoi had dug itself in during December, as their handling of the pause showed, and that the political troubles in the South would seem logically to be encouraging to Hanoi. At the same time, we were getting evidence that our pressures in the South were exerting an effect, and even some third country evidence that the bombing was having a cumulative depressing effect in the North. It was now clearly of vital importance to get the political situation in the South stabilized, and we hoped, established on a democratic basis through the Constitutional elections. If this could be done, Bundy thought that Hanoi might start to show some signs of give in 3-4 months, although he was not sanguine that Hanoi would be ready to call the operation off by the end of the year. . . .

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II. - Points Related to Bombing Policy

"At no point did Mr. Bundy refer specifically to any forthcoming operations. However, the course of the discussion permitted several related points to be made and discussed, as follows:

"A. Possibility of Chinese Intervention

Bundy and Ronning had a long exchange on this, in which virtually total agreement emerged that the Chicoms would be highly sensitive to any threat to their own territory and might well react if they concluded that it had become our objective to destroy North Vietnam or eliminate the Communist regime there. . . .

. . . . .  
"B. Mr. Bundy specifically said that we had no intention of bombing the cities of Hanoi and Haiphong, or mining the Haiphong harbor.

Ronning had given an interesting account of the air raid shelters constructed in Hanoi, and Mr. Bundy said flatly that they would not need these shelters. Ronning also expressed grave concern over any US action that tended to throw the North Vietnamese into the arms of the Chicoms, which he thought would be disastrous both in stiffening the North Vietnamese position and in bringing about heavy Chicom influence and eventual control in North Vietnam. Mr. Bundy said that we saw the same danger, and that it was a major element in our not contemplating the mining of Haiphong.



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"C. During the above discussions, Mr. Bundy twice made clear that we might well consider actions within our present policy and within the above analysis of Chicom reactions.

These references were not picked up by the Canadians, but can hardly have gone unnoticed."

June 23, 1966

STATE 4023 to Amembassy SAIGON; Info: Amembassy OTTAWA 1382.

"1. Canadians (MinExtAff Martin and Ronning) briefed Bundy this week on Ronning's trip to Hanoi June 14-17. . . .

"2. Ronning saw PAVN ICC Liaison officer Ha Van Lao, DRV Vice FonMin Nguyen Go Thach, and FonMin and Vice Premier Nguyen Duy Trinh while he was in Hanoi. He did not rpt not see Pham Van Dong or Ho Chi Minh. DRV officials were personally cordial but demonstrated complete inflexibility on matters of policy and put forward no new positions. Hanoi reiterated its demands that the US halt the bombing of the North, withdraw its forces from SVN, 'recognize the position of the NLF' (not otherwise spelled out), and adhere to the terms of the 1954 Geneva Agreements. Communist officials maintained they were confident that the Viet Cong would win and expressed their determination to maintain their position despite US bombing of the North.

"3. Ronning expressed concern to DRV officials about US POW's in North Viet-Nam but was given standard Hanoi position that POW's were 'criminals' under DRV law and told that no ICRC protection role would be considered, and provided no detailed information about the prisoners themselves.

"4. FYI: We believe above represents basic position we should pass to GVN and that we should not refer to oral message we agreed have Ronning pass to Hanoi on reciprocal dampening down of hostilities in SVN in exchange for US move on bombing of North. You should know, however, that Hanoi absolutely rejected US message and Trinh told Ronning DRV would pay no rpt no price whatsoever for halt to bombing. Hanoi also made clear to Ronning that in exchange for total halt to bombing it prepared only to enter into informal bilateral talks of type we had in January this year. Trinh and other DRV officials offered no alternative proposals to Ronning, who told us he had been profoundly depressed by Hanoi's position.

"5. Ronning said at one point in conversation in Hanoi Trinh had accused Canadians of being insincere in their good offices role and Ronning had offered leave immediately. Ronning said Trinh pulled back from his earlier position and agreed it useful

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for DRV to maintain existence of 'Canadian channel' but that even he probably now persuaded there no current prospect of effective approach to Hanoi.

"6. Bundy took opportunity of long dinner conversation with Martin, Ronning, and other senior ExtAff officials to review current US position and view of future in Viet-Nam. Ronning seemed more responsive to our approach than we had seen him before but Martin clearly remains determined to find some role for Canada in peace-making efforts in future. END FYI."

RUSK (Drafted by P. H. Kreisberg)

June 28, 1966

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION (SECRET/EXDIS); Subject: Ronning Mission; Participants: Mr. Roger Duzer, Counselor, Embassy of the French Republic; Mr. Peter M. Roberts, Counselor, Embassy of Canada; Mr. Paul H. Kreisberg, OIC, Mainland China Affairs, ACA.

"1. Mr. Duzer showed me a French telegram from Hanoi which dealt with the Ronning mission. The telegram stated that an unnamed Eastern European Embassy in Hanoi had briefed the AFP correspondent in Hanoi, Raffaelli, last week on the Ronning mission. The AFP man was told: (1) Ronning transmitted a USG message to Hanoi offering a halt in US bombing of North Vietnam in exchange for reciprocal reduction in Viet Cong hostilities in South Vietnam; (2) Hanoi had categorically rejected this proposal, indicating that they would pay no price for a halt to the 'completely unjustified' US bombing of North Vietnam; (3) Ronning had raised the question of US POWs and had been told emphatically that they were criminals and that there was no question of a protecting authority being designated; and (4) nevertheless the DRV was prepared to keep the Canadian channel open for future contacts. The French telegram assumed that the briefing must have been passed with DRV approval and suggested that the story had been leaked in order to indicate that North Vietnam, while not willing to accept the proposals carried by Ronning, was not completely intransigent and was prepared to talk with peace emissaries.

"2. Duzer pressed me on the accuracy of the briefing described in the telegram. I told him that this was a Canadian matter and that any specific comment on the content of the Ronning mission would have to come from the Government of Canada.

"3. After Duzer left, Canadian Counselor Peter Roberts, by coincidence visited me in my office and I informed him, with cautions as to the sensitivity of the information in terms of its source, of the message the French had received. I told him that I wanted it to be perfectly clear that, in the event AFP carried

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a story based upon Raffaelli's information, the source was not the USG and to note the apparent indifference of the DRV to maintaining secrecy on the Ronning mission. Roberts and I agreed that the French interpretation of why Hanoi may have leaked the gist of the Ronning mission was not completely persuasive, but we were not able to arrive at any more satisfactory explanation."