

Pentagon Memo Bares U.S. Viet Control

By Jack Anderson

Still—secret portions of the controversial Pentagon Papers disclose that the Johnson administration felt it could virtually dictate the hiring and firing of top-level South Vietnamese officials.

This revelation could prove acutely embarrassing to the U.S. government, which has repeatedly insisted it is involved in Vietnam to protect the South Vietnamese from domination by an outside power.

The Johnson administration's arrogant attitude is disclosed in a memo to the President from a high-ranking study group headed by LBJ's second Defense Secretary, Clark Clifford.

The memo has not appeared in any of the published excerpts and has been censored in the official version released by the Pentagon.

Here is what the censored memo says: "We should solicit Ambassador (Ellsworth) Bunker's views on the desirability of replacing the Prime Minister. If he is to be replaced, we should agree on his successor beforehand, in consultation with Thieu and Ky."

The memo reveals that this same attitude persisted towards other Vietnamese officials and military officers. It calls for the "relief of a specified list of corrupt officials now . . . Incompetent province chiefs who have plagued our

efforts in the past must be removed."

The memo adds that "incompetent ARVN (Vietnamese Army) officers must be removed, beginning with a specific list that should be made available by MACV." The letters MACV refer to the U.S. Command, which was to decide which Vietnamese officers should stay and which should go.

"We should not hesitate," the memo says, "to make our desires known and back them up by refusing to provide support for the incompetent. For key commanders, we should require the right of prior approval on a secret and discreet basis. The precise tools of leverage should be left to the U.S. Mission."

Political Censorship

The censored memo, clearly deals with political, not security, matters. Yet the Pentagon insists that all the omissions from its published version of the Pentagon Papers involve vital national security matters.

We have compared the official version with still-secret segments of the uncensored text. We can report that the deletions, like the Clifford memo, involve matters likely to embarrass the government, not threaten security.

Another example is a derogatory comment about India, which might make it hot for the U.S. ambassador in New

Delhi but would hardly endanger this nation's security.

It occurs during a discussion of diplomatic and military alternatives in Southeast Asia. "A further possibility," the document states, "would be to seek to enlist India more deeply in the Cambodian situation. This is worth trying, but the Indians are a weak reed for action or for effective diplomatic dramatization."

Also left out is a statement by former State Secretary Dean Rusk that the U.S. would have no alternative but the use of nuclear weapons if China became involved in our war in Southeast Asia. The statement occurs in a cable to Washington following a meeting between Rusk and South Vietnamese's then-Premier Nguyen Khanh in April, 1964.

"The Secretary said he wished to emphasize" that ". . . if escalation brought about a major Chinese attack, it would also involve the use of nuclear arms. Many free world leaders would oppose this.

"Chiang Kai-shek had told him fervently he did, and so did U Thant. Many Asians seemed to see an element of racial discrimination in use of nuclear arms; something we would do to Asians but not to Westerners.

Khanh replied he certainly had no quarrel with American use of nuclear arms; noted that decisive use of Atomic

bombs on Japan had in ending war saved not only American but also Japanese lives. One must use the force one had; if Chinese used masses of Humanity, we would use superior fire power."

Footnote: Some of the uncensored documents, we have learned, will be included in Alaska Sen. Mike Gravel's collection of Pentagon Papers, to be published by the Beacon Press.

Saving Postage

California Congressman Peter McCloskey's campaign to challenge President Nixon in the GOP primaries has always been a little shaky financially.

Still, we were surprised to discover that the personable McCloskey has been mailing campaign literature in congressional envelopes clearly franked "PUBLIC DOCUMENTS OFFICIAL BUSINESS." The envelopes contain colorful pamphlets asking: "Will YOU join the McCloskey Volunteers—and help 'Pete' now!"

"Pete" apparently needs some help interpreting the federal postal laws. Campaign mailings clearly are prohibited, and violators are subject to a \$300 fine. At McCloskey's office, an embarrassed aide said: "It's our error. About five of them went out in franked envelopes."

Bell-McClure Syndicate