

Washington Message to Lodge On Need to Remove Nhu

Cablegram from the State Department to Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge in Saigon, Aug. 24, 1963.

It is now clear that whether military proposed martial law or whether Nhu tricked them into it, Nhu took advantage

Glossary of Terms Appearing in Text

CAP—Prefix used to designate White House cablegrams sent through Central Intelligence Agency channel.

CAS—Code name for Central Intelligence Agency; not otherwise explained in documents.

CINCPAC—Commander in Chief, Pacific; position held in 1963 by Adm. Harry D. Felt.

COS—Chief of station, C.I.A.

COUNTRY TEAM—Committee of senior U.S. officials in Saigon, including Ambassador, U.S. military commander, C.I.A. station chief and others.

DEPTEL—State Department telegram.

DOD—Department of Defense.

E AND E—Escape and evasion.

EPTTEL—Apparently a typographical error for septel or deptel, which see.

G-3—Army General Staff branch handling plans and operations.

GVN—Government of (South) Vietnam.

JCS—Joint Chief of Staff.

MACV—Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.

NIE—National Intelligence estimate.

OPCON—Operations control.

POLAD—Political adviser (to the Commander in Chief, of Pacific forces).

REFTEL—Reference telegram—that is, "telegram referred to."

RVN—Republic of (South) Vietnam.

SEPTTEL—Separate telegram.

USOM—U.S. Operations Mission, the economic-aid organization of the embassy.

VC—Vietcong.

VNSF—Vietnamese Special Forces.

of its imposition to smash pagodas with police and Tung's Special Forces loyal to him, thus placing onus on military in eyes of world and Vietnamese people. Also clear that Nhu has maneuvered himself into commanding position.

US Government cannot tolerate situation in which power lies in Nhu's hands. Diem must be given chance to rid himself of Nhu and his coterie and replace them with best military and political personalities available.

If, in spite of all of your efforts, Diem remains obdurate and refuses, then we must face the possibility that Diem himself cannot be preserved.

We now believe immediate action must be taken to prevent Nhu from consolidating his position further. Therefore, unless you in consultation with Harkins perceive overriding objections you are authorized to proceed along following lines:

(1) First we must press on appropriate levels of GVN following line:

(a) USG cannot accept actions against Buddhists taken by Nhu and his collaborators under cover martial law.

(b) Prompt dramatic actions redress situation must be taken, including repeal of decree 10, release of arrested monks, nuns, etc.

(2) We must at same time also tell key military leaders that US would find it impossible to continue support GVN

militarily and economically unless above steps are taken immediately which we recognize requires removal of Nhus from the scene. We wish give Diem reasonable opportunity to remove Nhus, but if he remains obdurate, then we are prepared to accept the obvious implication that we can no longer support Diem. You may also tell appropriate military commanders we will give them direct support in any interim period of breakdown central government mechanism.

(3) We recognize the necessity of removing taint on military for pagoda raids and placing blame squarely on Nhu. You are authorized to have such statements made in Saigon as you consider desirable to achieve this objective. We are prepared to take same line here and to have Voice of America make statement along lines contained in next numbered telegram whenever

you give the word, preferably as soon as possible.

Concurrently, with above, Ambassador and country team should urgently examine all possible alternative leadership and make detailed plans as to how we might bring about Diem's replacement if this should become necessary.

Assume you will consult with General Harkins re any precautions necessary protect American personnel during crisis period.

You will understand that we cannot from Washington give you detailed instructions as to how this operation should proceed, but you will also know we will back you to the hilt on actions you take to achieve our objectives.

Needless to say we have held knowledge of this telegram to minimum essential people and assume you will take similar precautions to prevent premature leaks.