

# Further Harkins Comments To General Taylor

Cablegram from General Harkins to General Taylor, Oct. 30, 1963.

1. Admiral Felt not addee [sic] this message but will be provided copy upon his arrival Saigon tomorrow.

2. I now hold copy of SAIGON 768 and this amplifies my MAC 2028 which initially responded to your JCS 4188-63.

3. SAIGON 768 was Ambassador Lodge personal report to President in response to DEPTTEL 576 which is possible explanation why I had not seen 768 until one week after dispatch and only when I requested a copy so that

I might intelligently respond to your JCS 4188-63 which referred to 768.

4. Upon receipt of DEPTTEL 576 Ambassador Lodge requested that I provide him brief suggested inputs for responses to questions 1 and 2 (a) 1 of DEPTTEL 576 in that they were principally military in nature. I have done this on weekly basis but have had no knowledge as to whether my suggested brief inputs were utilized in his personal report since as indicated abot [sic] these were not opened to me.

5. My suggested brief inputs for para

1 which were provided the Ambassador for use as he saw fit in drafting his personal evaluations for the past three weeks follow:

16 OCT: On balance we are gaining in contest with the VC. There will continue to be minor ups and downs but the general trend has been and continues upward.

23 OCT: While significant changes are, and will be, difficult to identify on a day to day or even weekly comparative basis as regards the contest with the Viet Cong, the general trend continues to be favorable. The tempo of RVN-initiated operations is increasing and recently the tempo of VC-initiated activity has fallen off.

30 OCT: No change from that previously reported. National day affair this past week tended to bring about a slight reduction in the tempo of RVN initiated actions, however VC actions also waned and on balance the trend continues to be favorable.

6. My suggested brief inputs for paragraph 2 (a) which were provided the Ambassador for use as he saw fit in drafting his personal evaluations for the past three weeks follow:

16 OCT: The government has responded at many points when we have cited need for improvement in the campaign against the VC (shift of boundaries; placement of VNSF activities in corps areas under OPCON of corps

comdr; reallocation of forces). Additionally Gen Don and Gen Stilwell, my G-3 have spent the last week in the conduct of a Corps by Corps assessment of the present situation with a view to further desirable reallocation of forces. Based on their recommendations I will make further recommendations to Pres. Diem. (for inclusion in ANS to para 2 (a) Ambassador was advised that US/GVN military relations remain good).

23 OCT: Response received from the government in reaction to military areas where we have cited needed improvement has been favorable in some areas, while in other areas no indication of response has been received to date. In no case have they flatly resisted recommended improvements. Favorable indications are the commitment of nearly half of the general reserve to operations, plans for possible further redistribution of forces, and a recognition of the requirement to effect consolidation in the strategic hamlet program.

30 OCT: No specific responses have been received from the government this past week in reaction to military areas where we have cited need for improvement. This is believed due in great part to their preoccupation with National day affairs.

7. Comparison of my 23 October suggested brief inputs quoted above with SAIGON 678 indicates Ambassador Lodge did not see fit to utilize my suggestions to any significant degree. It also apparent that upon further reflection Ambassador determined that more detailed response was required than he initially felt necessary when he requested brief inputs on principally military items.

8. I believe certain portions SAIGON 768 require specific comment. These follow:

Para F of answer to question 1—View of Vice Pres Tho that there are only 15 to 20 all-around hamlets in the

area south of Saigon which are really good is ridiculous and indicates need for him to get out of Saigon and visit countryside so as to really know of progress which is being made. In past two weeks I have visited nine Delta provinces (Tay Ninh, Binh Duong, Hau Nghia, Long An, Kien Phong, Kien Hoa, An Giang, Phong Dinh, Chuong Thien) eight of which are south of Saigon, and I do not find the province chiefs or sector advisors to hold the same views as Vice Pres Tho.

Para H of answer to question 1—I am unable to concur in statement that quote one cannot drive as much around the country as one could two years ago end of quote. I believe it will be some time before, if we ever do, experience mass surrenders of the VC. I am unable to concur in statement that VC is quote in fact, reckoned at a higher figure than it was two years ago end quote. I have not observed the signs that hatred of the government has tended to diminish the Army's vigor, enthusiasm and enterprise. I find it difficult to believe the few rumors one hears regarding Generals being paid off with money and flashy cars. Most cars I see in use by Generals are same they have been using for past two years and few if any qualify as flashy to my mind. I do not concur with the evaluation of the 14 October report of the Delta Subcommittee of the Committee on Province Rehabilitation which states that the VC are gaining. Moreover take exception to the implication that the report represents official country team agency views and is consequently authoritative in the views it presents. Agency representatives on this sub-committee served as individuals in reporting to the COPROR Committee, incidentally there were wide divergencies even among sub-committee members. COPROR Committee received but did not place its stamp of approval or concurrence on report of its Sub-Committee. COPROR Committee returned the report to its Sub-Committee for rework. Consequently this report has not as yet been submitted to country team nor has it been referred to individual country team agencies for review and/or comment. Any views quoted from this Sub-Committee report therefore have no rpt no validity as expressions of country team or individual agency views.

Para J of answer to question 1 — With regard to the quote existing political control over troop movement, which prevents optimum use of the Army end quote. I do not deny that political influences enter into this picture however I feel we have made and are making significant strides in this area and do not concur that time is not working for us — so long as political controls remain as at present.

Para J of answer to question 1 — As indicated in paras 5 and 6 above and in other reports I have filed my evaluation is that from the military point of view the trend is definitely in RVN favor consequently I cannot concur that quote we at present are not doing much more than holding our own end quote.

Answer under (a) to question 2—I am correctly quoted here but para 6 gives full context of my suggested input.

Answer under (c) to question 2—As indicated para 6 above Ambassador was advised that US/GVN military relations remain good.