

Further Lodge Comments to Rusk

Cablegram from Ambassador Lodge to Secretary Rusk, Oct. 5, 1963.

Reference Big Minh-Conein meeting (CAS Saigon 1455). While neither General Harkins nor I have great faith in Big Minh, we need instructions on his approach. My recommendation, in which General Harkins concurs, is that Conein when next approached by Minh should:

1. Assure him that US will not attempt to thwart his plans.

2. Offer to review his plans, other than assassination plans.

3. Assure Minh that US aid will be

continued to Vietnam under Government which gives promise of gaining support of people and winning the war against the Communists. Point out that it is our view that this is most likely to be the case if Government includes good proportion of well qualified civilian leaders in key positions. (Conein should press Minh for details his thinking Re composition future Government). I suggest the above be discussed with Secretary McNamara and General Taylor who contacted Minh in recent visit.