

Richard Nixon Presidential Library
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October 6, 1968

MEMO FROM DICK McCORMACK

RE: JOHNSON PEACE MOVES

Reports from Paris indicate that Harriman and Vance are privately informing the press that they favor a speedy bombing pause.

Other reports from Washington, including James Reston's column in today's Sunday Times, suggest that Secretary of Defense Clifford favors such a pause.

Vance has just returned from Paris, reportedly to recommend this course of action to LBJ.

Leaks from such individuals are not likely without Presidential blessing. Quite possibly they preclude an announcement from Johnson that he "will go one step farther in the search for peace."

I think that this is quite likely and that it will occur very soon, probably within the context of a comprehensive progress report on Vietnam to the people.

Probably the bombing pause offer will be coupled by a threat to resume bombing over all of North Vietnam if there is no progress in Paris within a certain time, or if the North Vietnamese take advantage of the bombing halt to launch new attacks in or around the D.M.Z. The Johnson speech may also announce another "peace search" trip to South East Asia. Eugene Black and the Secretary of the Navy's separate but parallel journeys to this area may have been for the purpose of setting things up.

cc. R. Price P. Buchanan W. Allen

From R.T. McCormack
to: R.V. Allen

DRAFT

Sept. 9

BIAFRA STATEMENT

During the past few weeks we have witnessed Nigeria's civil war assume ever more tragic proportions. Biafran fears of atrocities and genocide, and Central Government obsession with total victory have brought efforts to extend meaningful assistance to the thousands of Ibo children starving daily to a complete standstill.

The Red Cross and other concerned relief agencies have rushed mountains of baby food and other protein rich nourishments to the borders of beleaguered Biafra, where it rots while 6000 Ibo youngsters perish every day, with thousands more children suffering permanent physical and mental impairment.

On Monday, Sept. 9, the Organization of African Unity will meet in executive session in Algiers to try once again to search for an African solution to this catastrophe. They will try to succeed at what Biafran and Central Government negotiations in Addis Ababa have failed for months to accomplish: a humane and just compromise. Thus far this senseless delay has cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Ibo children. Humanity can tolerate no further delay at the expense of these innocents.

The time for token gestures, platitudes, and other meaningless declarations of concern and regret is long past. Conscience demands that our Government bring immediate and direct pressure upon both Biafra and the Central Government to permit the distribution of relief food to those now needlessly dying in the agony of starvation.

Our own vast airlift capacity can greatly contribute to this task.

BRINGING IN THE NECESSARY METRIC TONS OF FOOD PER DAY.
Such an act by our Government might well break the present diplomatic log jam and create the atmosphere for a general compromise settlement.

MEMO TO: P.J.M. Buchanan

October 2, 1968

FROM: Agnes Waldron

cc: Greenspan/Allen

RE: Administration Actions to Influence the 1966 Election

The following material was prepared by Dick McCormack.

1. August 11. President Johnson assigned Harriman to explore any and all signs of peaceful intentions by Hanoi, no matter how faint.
2. August 24. Johnson endorsed proposals for an all Asian conference to settle the Vietnam war, but cautions that "we do not want to make it appear that we are trying to direct it or force it."
3. Sept. 5. Johnson said that a U.S. troop withdrawal from South Vietnam is dependant upon a pull-out of Communist forces.
4. Sept. 11. South Vietnam voters (80.8% of those eligible) elected a 117 member constituent assembly to draft a new constitution and pave the way for restoration of civilian rule in 1967.
5. Sept. 14. "Encouraged" by what he called a "vote of confidence" from the people of South Vietnam, President Johnson hailed today the "real progress and growing momentum" in that nation's economic and social rehabilitation. Johnson also made public an 18,000 word report by Robert Komer reviewing the accomplishment in non-military programs run jointly by the U.S. and S. Vietnamese.
6. Sept. 22. Ambassador Goldberg stated that the U.S. will halt the bombing of North Vietnam when it received assurances, privately or otherwise that Hanoi would respond by a reduction of its war effort. The U.S. would then be prepared to participate in a mutual withdrawal of military forces under international supervision.
7. Sept. 27. President Johnson announced that he had accepted the invitation of President Marcos of the Philippines to attend a heads of government conference in Manila to discuss the Vietnam conflict.
8. October 4. Official leaks reported that French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville had told President Johnson that North Vietnam no longer believes it can achieve a military victory, but that it was not yet in a mood for negotiations. (Probably came from a State Dept. backgrounder)
9. October 3. Johnson ruled out ending the bombing of North Vietnam without an indication that Hanoi will, in turn, deescalate its military activities in South Vietnam.
10. October 6. Johnson left for a 17-day trip to the Far East to include attending the Manila Conference. Also visited New Zealand, Australia, Thailand, Korea, Malasia and South Vietnam. Surprise

visit to Cam Ranh Bay. "With 700 correspondents chronicling the mutual back-scratching with Asian politicians, the finely honed 'joint communiques', the not so secret 'background briefings', there can be no doubt that Johnson will dominate the American headlines for two weeks." (Carl Rowan, 10/19/66)

In the background briefings, the "peace search" aspect of the Johnson journey received heavy emphasis.

"But one official accompanying the President noted that not much time was available for planning the mission or for identifying the areas where real movement is likely." (Star 11/19/66)

11. October 18. "Johnson Sees Asia at 'Turning Point' ...Voices Confidence at First Stop of 17-Day Tour of the Far East". (NYT) Johnson speech reasserted the United States pledge of military aid to the area "as long as danger threatens". But it (his speech) renounced again all interest in special status, privilege, territory or perpetual base rights. It looked ahead to the day when Asians would provide more and more for their own defense." (10/18/66) NYT Speech offered olive branch to communist China.
12. October 26. Johnson pledges troops at Cam Ranh Bay. "We shall never let you down, nor your fighting comrades, nor the 15 million people of South Vietnam nor the hundreds of millions of Asians who are counting on us to show here - here in South Vietnam that aggression doesn't pay and that aggression can't succeed."
At the Manila Conference itself the communique mentioned that: "The Government of Vietnam described the significant military progress being made against aggression."
Both Ky and Westmoreland made optimistic humanitarian speeches about progress in Vietnam.
13. November 5. Secretary McNamara flew to the Texas White House to announce a dramatic reduction in draft calls three days before the election. This in fact took place. In October, 49,000 men were drafted, in November, 37,600, December, 12,100. McNamara also announced that the number of troops in Vietnam would continue to grow at a lower rate than in 1966.

FURTHER AMPLIFICATION ON ANY OF THESE POINTS CAN BE PROVIDED WITHIN A FEW HOURS.

Sept 20

TO GAT BUCHANAN
FROM DICK MCCORMACK

PROPOSED STATEMENT BY NIXON ON HUMPHREY'S BOMB STOP PROPOSAL

I AM DEEPLY SADDENED TONIGHT TO LEARN OF VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY'S WILLINGNESS TO TRADE YOUNG AMERICAN LIVES IN VIETNAM IN RETURN FOR A FEW CHEAP POLITICAL POINTS.

ON SEPTEMBER X MR. HUMPHREY CALLED ON ME TO ~~LET~~ JOIN HIM IN A PLEDGE THAT NEITHER HE NOR I WOULD OFFER HANOI SOFTER PEACE TERMS AFTER THE ELECTION.

A FEW DAYS LATER HE STATED THAT HE WOULD NOT SAY ANYTHING THAT WOULD TEMPT THE MEN IN HANOI TO DRAG THIS WAR ON IN THE HOPE THAT THEY'LL GET A BETTER DEAL OUT OF ME JAN. 21.

TODAY BY ANNOUNCING THAT HE WOULD STOP THE BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM IF HE IS ELECTED, MR. HUMPHREY IS DOING EXACTLY WHAT HE PLEDGED HE WOULD NOT DO. HE IS COMPLETELY CUTTING THE GROUND FROM UNDERNEATH OUR NEGOTIATORS IN PARIS.

FOR MONTHS NOW OUR NEGOTIATORS HAVE OFFERED TO STOP THE BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM, IF HANOI WOULD OFFER SOME RECIPROCAL DEESCALATION, SOME INDICATION THAT THE LEVEL OF FIGHTING IN SOUTH VIETNAM WOULD BE REDUCED. THIS THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAVE CONSISTENTLY REFUSED TO DO.

MR. HUMPHREY IS AWARE THAT WE HAVE ALREADY SUSPENDED THE BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM EIGHT TIMES, ONCE FOR MORE THAN FIVE WEEKS. BUT NONE OF THESE BOMBING PAUSES HAS BROUGHT PEACE. INSTEAD EACH HAS BEEN USED BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE TO RUSH TRUCK LOADS OF TROOPS AND AMMUNITION TO THE BORDERS OF SOUTH VIETNAM.

ON MARCH 31 THE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED A BOMBING SUSPENSION OVER MORE THAN 75% OF NORTH VIETNAM'S TERRITORY. HANOI'S ONLY REACTION TO THIS HAS BEEN TO DOUBLE THE RATE OF SUPPLIES AND WAR MATERIAL COMING IN THROUGH THE PORT OF HAIPHONG AND TO STEP UP THEIR ATTACKS AND TERRORISM IN THE SOUTH.

FOR SOME TIME NOW, NORTH VIETNAM HAS ATTEMPTED TO MASS ENOUGH TROOPS AND AMMUNITION ACROSS THE DEMILITARIZED ZONE TO LAUNCH A MASSIVE ATTACK ON SOUTH VIETNAM'S NORTHERN TWO PROVINCES. THUS FAR WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FORESTALL THIS BY AGGRESSIVELY BOMBING ALL SUCH TROOP BUILDS UPS. MR. HUMPHREY NOW PROPOSES TO GIVE THE NORTH VIETNAMESE A PRIVILEGED SANCTUARY FROM WHICH TO LAUNCH ATTACKS AGAINST OUR MEN FIGHTING MEN IN THE SOUTH.

BY ANNOUNCING NOW THAT HE WILL STOP THE BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM FOUR MONTHS FROM NOW IF ELECTED, HUMPHREY IS GIVING THE NORTH VIETNAMESE CLEAR NOTICE THAT ALL THEY HAVE TO DO IS WAIT AND THEY WILL GET WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN DEMANDING FOR MANY MONTHS IN PARIS. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WE CAN HARDLY EXPECT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE TO NEGOTIATE SERIOUSLY NOW.

THIS IS A GROSSLY IRRESPONSIBLE ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF A MAN WHO WANTS TO BE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. I CALL ON HIM TO WEIGH CAREFULLY THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS ANNOUNCEMENTS, RETHINK HIS POSITION ON VIETNAM ONCE AGAIN, AND RETRACT HIS STATEMENT.

END OF PROPOSED STATEMENT.

I SUGGEST THAT WE TREAT THIS ASPECT OF THE HUMPHREY SPEECH SUA SEPARATELY, AND HAVE SOME OTHER NIXON SPOKESMAN DEAL WITH THE REST OF HIS COMMENTS AND DISTORTIONS.

END.

RMN-DT

M C A NY

URGENT MEMO FOR PAT BUCHANAN

SEPT 8

Memorandum to Mr. Richard Allen

From Richard McCormack

Topic: Vietnam Status: Inquiries in Washington

My initial conversations reinforced several un-
surprising conclusions:

(1) There has been absolutely no progress
of substance in Paris.

(2) The North Vietnamese strategists
base their hopes on an ultimate collapse of the
Thieu-Ky-Huong Government.

(3) A major do-or-die attack on Saigon,
coinciding with a surfacing and participation of the
substantial number of V. C. agents already in Saigon
can be expected before the U.S. election - possibly
very soon.

(4) General Abrams is held generally in
higher esteem by professionals and colleagues
than was his predecessor.
Bundy's assistant in charge of coordinating the Paris
negotiations in Washington, Hayward Isham, confirmed that
Humphrey's comments about "straws in the wind" were
nonsense and that they actually had the effect of harden-
ing the North Vietnamese negotiators' position.

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Isham also stated that the North Vietnamese negotiators demonstrated a great deal of bitterness about the defeat of the Mc Carthy forces and by the similar hard line of both major parties' platforms on Vietnam.

Isham felt that progress in the Paris talks would be sparked less by a new U. S. administration than by concrete political or military events in South Vietnam. He stated that the V.C. agents were trying to encourage disgruntled South Vietnamese politicians to undermine the Thieu Government. They have, however, met with very little success thus far.

Several things could change this, however. Prices have soared wildly within the last few weeks. For example, the black market price of the dollar has gone from 170 piastres to an unprecedented 210. Rice and other staples have similarly risen. A deflating piastre could plunge out of sight in the event of another prolonged V.C. attack on Saigon. This eventuality could cause a Government crisis of the first magnitude. No one seems to know for certain why this inflation is now resuming on this scale. Chinese black marketeers, who regulate the black market price of the dollar in Saigon, clearly contributed. Oddly, there seems to be a striking parallel between the black market rates in Hong Kong and Saigon. Yet the V.C. undoubtedly have increased the pressure on Saigon, driving up the price of supplies. Rumor about Mc Carthy's presidential prospects has also contributed to the scramble for liquidity by Saigon's merchant class.

In any case, the stability of the piastre is directly related to Vietnamese confidence in their Government's ability to cope with the V.C.. This recent inflationary trend, therefore, must be closely watched.

Mr. Nguyen Hoan, charge d'affaires at the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington, discussed the general situation in Vietnam with me for an hour. On questions such as what areas of policy and practice one should change to improve the war effort, Hoan requested a week's respite so that he and his colleagues could prepare a full and considered answer.

Hoan did, however, stress how important he felt two actions were: one, acceleration of the arming of local self-defense councils and, two, organizing these groups throughout the country. I expect Hoan will provide us with some politically useful information in the weeks to come.

Colonel Robert Outlaw, Congressional Liaison, DOD, offered to set up regular status briefings on Vietnam following receipt of a letter of introduction from the Nixon Headquarters.

Proposed follow-up activities:

(a) Before my next visit to Washington I shall attempt to arrange a meeting with former Secretary of Defense Mc Namara to explore his rumored dovish attitudes.

(b) I will also meet with the Pentagon briefers in a series of detailed briefings on the status of a

number of promising new classified programs aimed at the
V.C. infra-structure.

(c) I shall also revisit my initial contacts.

List of Contacts:

Nguyen Hoan
Charge d'Affaires
Embassy of Vietnam

John Burke
Head of:
Vietnam Working Group
Department of State

Hayward Ishem
Bundy's Assistant in charge of Paris negotiations coordination

Leonard Sullivan
Director of ODDRE, Southeast Asia
DOD

Colonel Robert Outlaw
Congressional Liaison
DOD

Nov. 2

To Ray Price
from Dick McCormack
re: AA's Proposed Task Force

I spent this morning at AA's home discussing his ideas on a task force.

Based on his Nixon interview, AA has apparently contacted a large number of people in the academic and diplomatic community.

Originally Nick proposed a large task force to be sent to Vietnam for ten days to function as a Royal Commission. As composition for the force he mentioned such diverse people as Admiral Burke, Mark Hatfield, Don Luce, Harriman, Senator Brook, General Walt, plus a large number of other academic and diplomatic luminaries.

He added that since "we are anyway on the make to disengage" the group wouldn't exactly function as a fact finding body.

Quite frankly I found Nick's ideas extremely vague. His own familiarity with Vietnam is dated by more than a decade. (He was a Lansdale aide during 1954-55.)

When he inquired as to my feelings on his ideas, I told him that I strongly felt that we needed to apply some first class talent to the problem of Vietnam, but I was uncertain how useful a brief trip to Saigon would be; and I felt some concern that the whole operation might degenerate into a mobile press conference, with Hatfield saying one thing, and Burke contradicting him. As Nixon's first post election involvement in Vietnam, I felt this might well be a most inauspicious beginning.

At this point Nick mentioned that perhaps the group could best function as an advisory board in Washington, chaired by RN, to review policy options for Vietnam.

I told him that this proposal might well have some promise and that he would be contacted after the election by the Staff.

He has subsequently called me to say that in view of the general uncertainty regarding Vietnam, he now feels that the functions of his group should be decided a week or so after the election.

An apparently very competent former Deputy to Lansdale, ^{Hudson} DAVE who returned from Vietnam only a couple of months ago, has been working with another group to study the problems facing the President Elect regarding Vietnam. From my conversations with him, I believe that his group will have some extremely useful suggestions ^{and reports} within ten days after the election.

He can be reached at RAND in Washington, E.C.
Tel. 202 2965000.

cc Price

Memorandum from Dick McCormack

re: A Vietnam Task Force for the Transition Period

The purposes of such a task force would be:

1. Evaluate the current situation both in Vietnam and Paris
2. Develop and explore policy options for RVN
3. Keep RVN informed on what certainly will be a highly unusual situation.
4. Establish lines of communication between the New Administration and American and Vietnamese working level personnel.
5. Make recommendations on staffing appropriate agencies both in Saigon and Washington.

The problems such a task force may involve:

1. The possibility that the South Vietnamese will attempt to play the task force off against the Old Administration thus preventing effective action in Paris or elsewhere.
2. Premature leaks from the task force which would undermine morale still more in Saigon.
3. The lack of security clearances could prevent the task force from being kept fully informed. (Security clearances take up to three months. If Lyndon Johnson wants to have full control of the situation, he can quietly delay the security clearance process, thus denying the task force staff support.
4. Individual members of the task force should not come to Saigon with the attitude that "we're here as a result of what you've created." Rather, the task force should be seen as

be stressed.

5. To prevent misunderstandings, the group should coordinate regularly with the Embassy and MACV. I think a member of the Embassy staff should be included on all official visits with South Vietnamese leaders.
6. Any group which lacks a rather thorough familiarity with the situation in Vietnam will unavoidably become a victim of the slick briefings which all American agencies in Vietnam have developed to cope with the hoard of VIP visitors which come to Vietnam for varying periods.
7. Any group which comes to Vietnam with very strong views, either hawkish or dovish, and only remains for a ten day or two week period can not be expected to return to the United States with anything more profound or useful than a strengthening of previous prejudices. The task force, in any case, should remain at least a month in Vietnam and keep control of their schedule, lest they be taken on a circuit of the best refugee camps, the most successfully pacified hamlets, and elite ARVN units.
8. Most of the professionals associated with Vietnam have been with the present Administration in one capacity or another. In our search for "fresh, objective, thinking", we should beware of the pitfalls of Amateurism.
9. Within a large diverse group, there may be a temptation for those members who feel that their opinions are not being given sufficient weight to attempt to win their case through the press.

My own feelings are that we should convene a small group of knowledgeable people, including at least one person who knows RN very well and in whom RN has complete confidence, to begin an immediate study of the situation in Vietnam and Paris.

Within a very few weeks I think that this group should be sent to Vietnam. Without compromising our ability to influence the Government of South Vietnam by a premature unqualified promise of support, the head of this task force should do what he can to restore self confidence to the Government of President Thieu. Thieu lost an immense amount of face as a result of the Johnson declaration and the preceding confrontations between Bunker and Thieu. It is extremely important that all the careful work of consolidating power under President Thieu not be in vain. The American people will not give us the time to repeat this process in event of another coup.

Until this can be done to restore self confidence, to resume negotiations in Paris would be very unwise. Thieu has been made to look like an American puppet, which is of course, how Hanoi has been attempting to portray him for years.

So much face has been lost that it might well be wise to encourage the Johnson Administration to permit the South Vietnamese to stall for a number of weeks.

The President Elect, by speaking out or withholding comment, has a significant weapon to influence the Johnson administration. I think at very least he should at the outset demand a basic veto on major policy questions which come up between election and Jan 20. Johnson's apparent obsession with his place in

history might well lead him to follow unwise policies in an attempt to solve the Vietnamese problem. Such hasty or ill considered action by LBJ during these next vital three months could not only immensely complicate the task of the New President, but also so compromise our negotiating position as to permit ultimately a communist takeover.