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ORIGINAL

Vol. 1 OF 5

NATIONAL SECURITY
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The United States Senate

R379

Report of Proceedings

INVENTORIED:
2/22/77
BC

Hearing held before

Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental
Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities

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Friday, June 20, 1975

Washington, D. C.

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C O N T E N T S

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EXECUTIVE SESSION

Friday, June 20, 1975

United States Senate,
Select Committee to Study Governmental
Operations with Respect to
Governmental Activities,
Washington, D. C.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:15 o'clock
p.m., in Room S-407, The Capitol, Senator John Tower presiding.

Present: Senators Hart of Michigan, Huddleston, Mondale,
Morgan, Tower (presiding), Mathias, Baker and Schweiker.

Also present: William Miller, Staff Director; Frederick
A. O. Schwarz, Jr., Chief Counsel; Curtis R. Smothers, Minority
Counsel; and Frederick Baron, Charles Kirbow, Burton Wides,
Michael J. Madigan, William Bader, David Aaron and Patrick
Shea, Professional Staff Members.

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PROCEEDINGS

(2:15 p.m.)

Senator Tower. The Committee will come to order.

Before we proceed to hear the witness, I think we should have a report from the team that went down to the White House this morning to examine some documents, and I believe they will report to us and have a recommendation on how the Committee should agree to handle this material, and shall I call on --

Senator Mondale. Howard has the notes.

Senator Tower. I call on Senator Baker.

Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, Bill Bader has the notes.

Senator Mondale. Well then, call on me. I can read them.

Senator Tower. Mr. Bader?

Mr. Bader. Thank you, Senator.

The documents that we reviewed briefly at the White House situation room were four different categories.

In the first category, there were copies of the so-called Mongoose files. These files contain minutes of the Special Group Augmented and copies of the rest of the Mongoose files, arranged in chronological order. And these holdings are from the files of the Executive Secretary of the 40 Committee and include the files of the Chairman and the Executive Secretary of the Special Group Augmented.

Also these trust files are turned over to the Chairman by General Lansdale after the group ceased functioning, that is,

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1 the Mongoose group. As I looked at them, there were about a
2 hundred documents in this first group.

3 The second group of documents are CIA's Mongoose files,
4 which we have already seen. There are some six files, and I
5 assume these are the same files, and we have seen them. But of
6 course, we didn't have a chance to go through them with any
7 care.

8 The third group of files were the Rockefeller Commission
9 papers and files on assassination, and that includes the summary
10 of facts, the investigation of plans for the assassination of
11 Castro and perhaps more than Castro, the other assassinations,
12 Trujillo as well.

13 Mr. Madigan. Lumumba's in there and also a reference to
14 Sukarno.

15 Mr. Baker. That is a some 80 or 90 page document which, as
16 I say, is a summary of facts, and this was prepared by David
17 Belin.

18 Senator Baker. It might be important to note here, Mr.
19 Chairman, that the White House indicated to us that that summary
20 was not a Rockefeller Commission document and did not necessarily
21 represent the position of the Rockefeller Commission as such.

22 That is the way I interpret their language.

23 I get the impression that this may have been a summary that
24 was not accepted for conclusion in the report, therefore there
25 may be some conflict.

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1 Senator Morgan. It was prepared by whom?

2 Senator Baker. Belin, the Executive Director.

3 Mr. Bader. The last category, the fourth category, are
4 some Special Group minutes, that is, a file, it is a tiny file,
5 really, of assassinations and allegations, and these minutes
6 were culled from Special Group meetings and they are highly
7 selective in the sense that they are documents as they could
8 find them in their search that related only to Cuba and it is
9 clear that there is a great deal more to come in this category
10 of the Special Group minutes. It was just on Cuba. There was
11 nothing on the other assassinations.

12 Senator Schweiker. You mean more that you have not seen
13 yet?

14 Mr. Bader. More that they have not put together as yet,
15 or at least they have not made available to us, and those were
16 the four categories.

17 It is a little hard to judge just how much work it will
18 take to go through them. It is, I would say, somewhere around
19 400 to 500 pages, perhaps.

20 Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, I would ask Fritz and Bill
21 to monitor what I'm about to say next to make sure that I reflect
22 it accurately.

23 There is a general uneasiness at the White House about
24 letting us have these documents unrestricted, although pretty
25 clearly they are committed to let us have them, under some

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1 circumstance.

2 It is also clear to me that some documents have not yet
3 been located and supplied to us and that parts of some documents
4 have been deleted. I think we probably can get that deleted
5 information before very long.

6 The suggestion was made that we ask the White House to
7 bring those documents up here by their own personnel on Monday
8 so that we could use them to examine witnesses. If they care
9 to keep someone here to retain technical possession of the
10 documents, to take them back with them at the close of that day
11 or any day on which we use them, they might do that, and that
12 sooner or later we would have to find a way to utilize those
13 documents, meaning to put certain documents in the record
14 or to read them into the record or to supply copies.

15 Rod Hill seemed to think well of that idea. I told him
16 that I would suggest it to Senator Tower and to the rest of
17 the Committee, and hopefully Senator Tower or Senator Church
18 would be back in touch with the White House to see if we can
19 negotiate an agreement along those lines. I think we can. I
20 think the White House will agree to that arrangement.

21 Senator Mondale. There are two points I would like to
22 make.

23 Senator Tower. Fritz?

24 Senator Mondale. I think Hills was saying, from some of
25 the documentation we looked at it was clear that we may not yet

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1 have all of the documents that we ought to look at, and I think
2 they are looking for more documents. Things we read referred
3 to things that were not there. So I don't think we can be
4 satisfied yet that the full record is available for perusal.

5 The second thing is, in our quick look it is very apparent
6 that we must have the documentation. I saw some which would
7 have been very important in our questioning McCone, which may
8 have helped him remember things. It was very central to it.

9 I think we wasted a couple of hours when it could have been
10 done very quickly with one or two documents.

11 I saw, there were several other documents that immediately
12 struck me as being essential to our work. I don't think we saw
13 anything that was revolutionary or that filled in a lot of the
14 central gaps.

15 Senator Tower. You didn't see anything that was sensitive
16 to the extent that it might reflect on a foreign government,
17 or something like that?

18 Senator Mondale. There might be stuff in there, honestly,
19 I don't know. But just looking at our work --

20 Senator Tower. What you're saying, Fritz, is you don't
21 think we need all of it, that we could select out some of it,
22 is that it?

23 Senator Mondale. What I am saying is I think there is
24 more available somewhere than we saw, and they said they are
25 still looking. Hills said he wasn't satisfied that it was all

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1 there yet, and secondly, we've got to have it.

2 Senator Tower. Right.

3 Senator Mondale. And we need it for cross-examination and
4 we need it --

5 Senator Tower. Well, the question is, do you need every-
6 thing that you looked at today, or do you think --

7 Senator Mondale. I don't know. Some of the stuff we
8 already have.

9 Mr. Bader. Some, we already have.

10 Senator Mondale. So we don't need that.

11 Senator Tower. Yes.

12 Senator Mondale. The other material, it struck me that
13 I don't see what we have to lose by having most of it. I think
14 most of it is historical.

15 Senator Baker. I think we ought to have all of it, John.
16 The essence of the suggestion I tried to make was that we have
17 physically present in this room all of it, and then we can decide
18 how we use it and what parts of it.

19 Senator Huddleston. One question on the documents.

20 Is that just the material that the Rockefeller Commission
21 has had?

22 Senator Baker. No, the Rockefeller Commission apparently
23 has not had these NSC minutes.

24 Senator Mondale. They did not have the NSC minutes.

25 Mr. Schwarz. They asked for them and we were told about

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1 ten days ago that the White House refused to give it to the
2 Rockefeller Commission for some reason.

3 Senator Baker. Tha's right.

4 Senator Mondale. The interesting thing, among other things,
5 it tells you exactly who was at all of these meetings.

6 Senator Baker. That's remarkable, there's no doubt about
7 who was there and in most cases who said what.

8 Senator Mondale. The heat was on, there's no doubt about
9 that.

10 Senator Tower. You've heard Senator Baker's proposal.
11 Is it the sense of the Committee that we should adopt that
12 procedure for now, at least, for -- let's say, what is it,
13 Monday that we want them up here?

14 Mr. Schwarz. Bundy is coming at 2:00 o'clock on Monday
15 and we've set an opportunity to meet with him and go over and
16 refresh his recollection and so forth. Are we entitled to have
17 them for that purpose as well as the actual use of them at the
18 hearing?

19 Senator Baker. My understanding is that there is to be no
20 restriction on our use of them.

21 Senator Mondale. We not only need them, but we need them
22 in a way that they're useful to us on cross-examination. Now, as
23 I understand it, the staff will be down there this afternoon and
24 maybe into tomorrow and the next day, for that matter.

25 Senator Tower. So the staff can sift through some of this?

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1 Mr. Schwarz. And digest it, and so forth.

2 Senator Mondale. And we should ask that the materials
3 that are appropriate or relevant to the next witness be avail-
4 able to us and that staff have them organized in order
5 to help us.

6 Senator Baker. There is a point there I'd like to vary on a
7 little.

8 I don't want to give the White House an opportunity to pick
9 out of that stuff what they're going to send up here. I would
10 like our request to be to send all of it, and then for us to
11 decide here, with the White House concurrence, on how we use it,
12 that is, do we read it into the record, do we photocopy it, or
13 do they supply us a copy of it.

14 Let us make the essence of it that they send it here.

15 Senator Tower. The proposition by Senator Baker is that
16 we ask them to bring the documents here, allow the bearer to
17 be present while the documents are being used, so they maintain
18 technical possession and take them back to the White House after
19 we have used them in our session or subsequent sessions.
20 Then we can determine at a later time what final disposition we
21 make.

22 Is that correct, Howard?

23 Senator Baker. That's correct.

24 Senator Tower. I was not able to get Senator Church. He
25 is off in the wilds of Idaho.

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1 Mr. Schwarz. I talked with him last night, and this is
2 quite consistant with our conversation.

3 Senator Tower. I think this will be agreeable with him,
4 but I told his secretary that if, for any reason, after he gets
5 in touch with his office he does find it objectionable that I
6 would reopen the matter in a subsequent meeting.

7 Senator Mondale. Just one question.

8 There would not be a White House staff person here during
9 someone's testimony?

10 Mr. Schwarz. They'd sit outside the door.

11 Senator Mondale. I don't think he should be here as a
12 monitor.

13 Senator Baker. I think that's a point we'll have to make
14 clear. I agree with you, Fritz, he ought to be physically
15 present, like guarding the door that we don't run off with it,
16 but not here.

17 Senator Tower. And we would undertake that we're not going
18 to xerox them or anything while he's sitting out there.

19 Is that agreed on by everybody? Is there any objection to
20 that?

21 Then that is the way we will proceed.

22 Senator Baker. Mike Madigan makes a point that's well
23 taken. It was Mike's understanding that Hill's was telling us
24 there were certain other documents that he had already identified
25 but had not yet reviewed and we ought to make sure that we get

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1 all of those as well.

2 Senator Tower. I think the problem down there is they do
3 not have enough staff to get all of this stuff together, is that
4 it?

5 Senator Baker. I think the problem is they do not want to
6 be taken by surprise.

7 Senator Huddleston. They want to see it all first.

8 Senator Tower. They want to see it before it comes to us?

9 Senator Baker. I don't blame them.

10 Senator Tower. I understand Mr. Kissinger has some interest
11 in seeing them.

12 Senator Mondale. I think that's why they don't have enough
13 staff.

14 Senator Tower. Okay.

15 Is there anything else of a housekeeping nature to come
16 up?

17 Senator Baker. I might say to the Committee, Mr. Chairman,
18 that you conducted a most intriguing interview with Mr. Angleton
19 yesterday.

20 Senator Tower. We did. In effect, we took a deposition
21 from him in my office yesterday, and I think it was very
22 illuminating, to say the least.

23 Senator Morgan. He looks the part.

24 Senator Baker. He sure does.

25 Senator Tower. So I would suggest to the Committee

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1 the reading of that deposition. I think it would be worth your
2 time.

3 Senator Baker and Senator Mathias were there also.

4 All right.

5 Mr. Kirbow?

6 Mr. Kirbow. Mr. Chairman, I think it would be helpful to
7 the members if they know that when Mr. Conein is testifying that
8 he has before him what he refers to as an afteraction report,
9 in which both he and the Station Chief before Mr. ~~Smith~~ Mr. 06
10 Richardson, John Richardson, compiled immediately after the coup
11 took place in Saigon.

12 He is going to limit his testimony principally, since he
13 has no personal knowledge of the Washington scene, to painting
14 for the Committee, if you will, a picture of the events that
15 transpired from early May of 1963 on through the time of the
16 coup, and he will then be prepared to answer any questions,
17 much as we did with Mr. Colby this morning.

18 Senator Tower. He wants to proceed in narrative form?

19 Mr. Kirbow. Yes.

20 Senator Tower. All right, we will proceed with Mr. Conein.

21 (Whereupon, at 2:27 o'clock p.m., the witness entered the
22 hearing room.)
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1 Senator Tower. Mr. Conein, thank you for coming today.
2 We will be questioning you under oath today, so if you would
3 raise your right hand, do you solemnly swear that the testimony
4 you are about to give before this Committee is the truth, the
5 whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

6 Mr. Conein. I do, sir.

7 Senator Tower. Counsel will advise you on your rights.

8 Mr. Kirbow. Please be seated.

9 Mr. Schwarz. Mr. Conein, just a couple of procedural
10 matters.

11 You are aware that you have the right to counsel?

12 Mr. Conein. Right.

13 Mr. Schwarz. And if at any time you want to stop and
14 obtain counsel in the middle of these proceedings you have
15 that right as well?

16 Mr. Conein. Yes.

17 Mr. Schwarz. And of course you have all your constitutional
18 rights including your rights under the Fifth Amendment, you
19 understand that?

20 Mr. Kirbow will question you.

21 Senator Tower. Mr. Kirbow?

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1 TESTIMONY OF LUCIEN E. CONEIN

2 Mr. Kirbow. Mr. Conein, for the record would you please
3 state your full name, your current address, and present
4 occupation?

5 Mr. Conein. My name is Lucien E. Conein, C-o-n-e-i-n.
6 I live at 1111 Ingleside -- I-n-g-l-e-s-i-d-e -- Avenue,
7 McLean, Virginia.

8 I am employed by the Department of Justice Drug Enforcement
9 Administration.

10 Mr. Kirbow. Thank you.

11 Mr. Conein, would you be good enough to give the Committee
12 a brief synopsis of your background from the time you first
13 became engaged in any government work, either military or
14 civilian?

15 Mr. Conein. I enlisted in the Army in 1941, September of
16 1941, and in 1943 I graduated from OCS in Fort Benning, Georgia.

17 At that time, I had been asked to volunteer for the Office
18 of Strategic Services, which I did, and was sent to England for
19 further training in the Special Operations Executive, which was
20 an organization affiliated with the OSS under British Command.

21 I was parachuted behind the lines in France in 1944. In
22 December, 1944 I returned to the United States and I was sent
23 for training preparatory to going to the China, Burma, India
24 theatre which I did in 1945.

25 In March of 1945, the French garrison in French Indochina

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1 had been attacked by the Japanese and I was asked to parachute
2 into the area to recuperate elements of the French forces, to
3 consolidate them, retrain them, go back into Indochina and to
4 form a base for operations in the northern part of Indochina.

5 This I did and later on I was in Hanoi with the Viet Minh
6 took over in 1945, and I stayed until 1946 when I came back to
7 the United States and then I was sent to the SSU mission, which
8 was the predecessor of the CIA, to Germany and I served in the
9 SSU, the CIG and the CIA.

10 I left Germany in 1953, still in the military, where I
11 became a desk chief at CIA, and in 1954 I was asked by Mr. Helms
12 if I would go back to Vietnam, which I did, under the command of
13 then-Colonel Edward G. Lansdale and I was assigned to North
14 Vietnam.

15 I stayed there until the Viet Minh took over in October of
16 1954. I then went to Haiphong, and in 1955 I came to Saigon.
17 and at that time, the operation was to establish a viable
18 government in Vietnam, the government of Ngo Dien Diem.

19 I remained until 1956 and in 1956 I asked to be relieved
20 from the CIA so I could return to the military service. I had
21 been up to that time, approximately 13 years as a military man
22 with OSS, SSU, CIG and CIA.

23 I left and I joined the Special Forces in the Army and I
24 served from '56 to '59. In 1959 I was assigned to the Assistant
25 Chief of Staff for Intelligence of the U.S. Army and was sent to

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1 Iran where I served for two years.

2 I retired from the military in 1961 and returned to the
3 CIA. I was sent to Vietnam in 1961 and I remained in Vietnam
4 until August of 1967.

5 I left the CIA in 1968, July the 15th, retired from the
6 CIA and military. I went in private business for a couple of
7 years and in 1971 I worked as a consultant for the White House
8 for approximately four months, four or five months.

9 I then was a consultant to the Bureau of Narcotics and
10 Dangerous Drugs of the Department of Justice and I joined the
11 DEA in 1973 and I am presently working for the DEA.

12 Mr. Kirbow. Directing your attention then to that period
13 after you returned to Vietnam after 1961 to the period beginning
14 in early 1963, would you relate to the Committee your experiences
15 in connection with the build-up and the eventual General's
16 coup and the downfall of the Diem government?

17 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

18 In February of 1962, two Air Force pilots, Vietnamese Air
19 Force pilots, attacked the Presidential Palace of Ngo Dien Dien.
20 This was not the first indication that there was something
21 wrong, because if you will recall in November of 1960 there was
22 another attempted coup.

23 At that time, in February, I was asked if I would go to the
24 different military leaders which I knew and had known in the
25 past to find out what was the political pressure, what was the

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1 temperature, was there really some dissidence within the military
2 ranks, was there really a basis for an uprising against Ngo Dien
3 Dien.

4 I was unable at that time to determine this fact. There
5 was isolated dissidence within the military structure. This was
6 reported in February or March in 1962.

7 In the meantime, Mr. Colby had assigned me to work with the
8 Minister of the Interior of the Government of Vietnam, and I
9 was responsible to be the liaison between the CIA and the
10 Ministry of the Interior on a program, on a project, which was
11 called Strategic Hamlet Program.

12 This was an idea forwarded by Ngo Dien Nhu, the President's
13 brother and counsellor, to establish security within the
14 hamlets and the villages where people lived so that they could
15 deny access of food, taxes and what have you to the Vietcong.

16 In this position I was able to travel quite extensively
17 because I was under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior
18 and indirectly I worked for the President's brother who was in
19 charge of the program and by travelling I was able to go to
20 every province, I was able to talk to unit commanders down to
21 and including small sections. Some of these people I had known
22 for many years; some of them I had known back even in World War
23 II. Some of them were in powerful positions, and I was able to
24 talk to them on a person to person basis, not as a government
25 official.

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1 I did wear a uniform though I was out of the Army when I
2 was in that position because those military commanders who knew
3 me always assumed that I was in the Army and that I was still in
4 the Army. Therefore, it was much easier for me to travel in
5 uniform and special arrangements were made for me to carry an
6 identification card as being an active duty military officer.

7 This was done with the permission of General Harkins, and
8 it was also known to General Westmoreland when General West-
9 moreland took over.

10 In that period, I would say that the country team was
11 attempting to get organized so they could show that they were
12 speaking with one head under Ambassador Nolting, and we had
13 a committee which the military and also agencies, including
14 the CIA, were members, and it was called the Trushart Committee
15 where we jointly made plans to help out the government of
16 Vietnam in different programs, whether they be military programs
17 or USAID type programs, self-help programs, also programs of
18 which to arm the villagers so they could protect themselves.

19 We didn't arm them with modern weapons, we gave them
20 shotguns, .12 gauge shotguns. There were very few modern
21 weapons available for that type of activity.

22 At the same time, we were interested in the Montagnard
23 Program and I did work with the Montagnards -- those are the
24 hill tribes in central Vietnam.

25 We did arm certain elements of the Montagnards, and we did

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1 keep them up and organize them in paramilitary forces, and these
2 forces were eventually turned over completely to the U.S.
3 Army.

4 About -- well, I can say definitely on 7 of May, 1963,
5 the Minister of Interior, myself and his entourage flew to
6 Hue in central Vietnam. While in Hue, it was on my aircraft that
7 I had assigned to me for that day -- while in Hue, they had a
8 very large meeting of different military authorities and at that
9 time I did not realize what was going on.

10 They had met with the President's brother, Ngo Dien Can,
11 who was considered the war lord, in a way, and some decisions
12 were made, of which I was not aware of. We returned quite late
13 the night of the 7th; though I wanted to stay, the Ministry of
14 the Interior told me it would be impossible. I wanted to see
15 the celebration of the birthday of Buddha. I wanted to see
16 the boats with the candles lit going down the perfumed river,
17 but it was not to be.

18 The next day there was an attack by the military forces on
19 the Buddhists. Up to that time, the Buddhists, as an entity,
20 was not a political force and never thought of being, and when
21 the attack on the Buddhists came about, this was, in my estima-
22 tion, one of the turning points in what was happening in Vietnam.

23 It could have been salvaged, but this -- again, I had
24 talked later with the Minister of the Interior and I had talked
25 with Ngo Dien Nhu on several occasions when they were trying to

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1 appease the situation. They were trying to meet some demands
2 of the Buddhist leaders. This, unfortunately, did not come
3 about.

4 I did not travel too much during the latter part of May
5 or June, and it was quite evident at that time, to me and to
6 other people who were there that there was a strong anti-American
7 feeling, and also a restriction put on by the government of
8 Vietnam about people associating with Americans.

9 The only time that it broke down was on the 4th of July of
10 1963 when the Ambassador Nolting threw a party for the Indepen-
11 dence Day and it seemed like every military leader and political
12 personality was attending American parties that day.

13 I received a message to meet with General Don, who
14 was Commander of I CORPS at that time, and it was in a public
15 place, it was in the Caravelle Hotel downstairs where they had
16 sort of a big dining room, a nightclub, and I was present with
17 General Don and his entourage and everybody from the Diem
18 government was in the same place. The place was jam packed.

19 lb It was at that time on the 4th of July that I had the
20 first indication that something serious was being contemplated
21 when General Don told me that if the Buddhist situation does
22 not get settled that the military are planning. I reported
23 this fact, and I believe it was around the 8th or 9th of July,
24 that more indications -- on the 11th of July, Ngo Dien Nhu
25 called the Generals together for a staff meeting at the General

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1 Staff Headquarters and shocked them by telling them that he
2 knew of some coup planning going on by the Generals.

3 This scared the Generals and other officers, needless to
4 say, that Ngo Dien Nhu would be completely aware that there
5 was some dissidence in the ranks.

6 Nothing happened much before the 20th or 21st of August
7 of 1963. At that time -- I have to go back a little bit.
8 We had had bonzes burning themselves, and we had had local
9 press releases made by Madam Nhu that sometimes were not too
10 well received by the Americans and also antagonized the
11 population.

12 On the night of the 21st of August, General Ton That Dinh,
13 as Military Governor of Saigon and Commander of the 3rd Corps,
14 had established a curfew. If I recall correctly, the curfew
15 was to start about 7:00 or 8:00 o'clock at night. Anybody
16 seen after that time would be seen -- after that would be shot.
17 And that night, elements -- later on, we didn't know at that
18 time, later on proving to be elements of the Special Forces,
19 which was the praetorian guard of Ngo Dien Nhu and the police
20 dressed in military uniforms attacked the pagodas in Saigon.

21 Now what was very bad about this, Ambassador Nolting had
22 already been relieved and Ambassador Lodge was on his way to
23 take over. And Ambassador Lodge arrived on the 22nd or 23rd
24 of August. I am not sure exactly of the date.

25 And he found that Saigon was an armed camp.

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1 Now, during this period of these attacks on the pagodas,
2 there had been many contacts made by a lot of people to anybody
3 who would listen to them talking about doing something about
4 doing away with the existing regime, I had talked with the
5 different generals and on the one time in August -- I don't
6 recall if it was the 23rd or 24th -- we received a cable which
7 has later been known as the famous Roger Hillsman cable, which
8 practically gave us the go ahead that this type of thing could
9 not continue.

10 Talking of type of thing, we're talking about the present
11 regime continuing as it was.

12 There was a lot of talk of coups. We had met with
13 Generals on different occasions. I had met with them, other
14 people had also. We had met with Colonels and junior officers.
15 And we anticipated that there would be some type of action taken
16 in the latter part of August.

17 If you will recall, or those of you who don't know, it
18 aborted at that time. It aborted because, one, they did not
19 have necessary forces, I am talking about the coup plotters,
20 did not have the necessary forces to combat those loyal to the
21 Diem government, namely elements of the Marines, elements of
22 the Rangers, the Presidential Guard, and other units, and
23 especially the Special Forces, which were the best-armed troops
24 available.

25 Also, they announced in the press that the CIA was paying

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1 off or was paying to have a coup. This was a very shrewd and
2 calculating move on any man on the quality of Ngo Dien Nhu
3 who was a shrewd politician and also a master of psychological
4 warfare.

5 During the month of September, there was still more talk
6 of coups and at that time, the month of September, I had been
7 told by Ambassador Lodge that I was to monitor coup planning
8 only. I was not told to -- that I was to convey any messages.
9 I had conveyed messages to Big Minh on two occasions, General
10 Khiem -- K-h-i-e-m -- on one occasion. I had met General
11 Khiem and Big Minh on another occasion.

12 On several occasions I had met General Don and other
13 military leaders.

14 In September, the latter part of September, there had been
15 some reassessment of what had been going on.

16 I will say this, that I worked for Ambassador Lodge. I
17 reported to Ambassador Lodge and I received my instructions
18 from Ambassador Lodge. If they were cabled instructions, he had
19 a very good habit of not reading something. He would fold a
20 piece of paper and what pertained to you for instructions he
21 would let you read that, and that alone so that you didn't
22 know who was sending it or where it came from. He just read
23 that, and he said those are the instructions, do you understand
24 them? Yes, sir; all right, go carry them out.

25 In October -- I'm running over these things in a hurry --

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1 in October, the first part of October, I think October the
2 3d or 4th, I was asked to contact Big Minh. I was by myself
3 and I contacted Big Minh at his headquarters.

4 At that time, Big Minh explained to me that they had had,
5 that there was going to be a coup d'etat, that they didn't want
6 this to be an American sponsored coup d'etat, they wanted to be
7 assured of American backing, specifically in the part where it
8 comes to military and economic aid after the coup had been
9 successful.

10 Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, could I interrupt for just
11 a second?

12 Senator Tower. Senator Baker.

13 Senator Baker. It's a terribly fine point, and I don't
14 mean to be critical, but could you elaborate a little bit on
15 what you understood him to mean when he said he did not want
16 it to be an American-sponsored coup d'etat, but he wanted
17 assurances in advance of American economic and military support
18 after a successful coup d'etat.

19 Could you tell me how you make that distinction a little
20 clearer?

21 Mr. Conain. Yes, sir.

22 I had specific instructions from the Ambassador, and all
23 the instructions I received, Senator, before any meeting, I
24 was told exactly what I would say, and if I recall at that
25 time, I was told to go ahead to the meeting, and I have it here

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1 in the paper -- and I hate to rifle through paper, but I could
2 answer it if I could just --

3 Now, what the General meant, he did not want actual U.S.
4 participation in the coup d'etat. He did not want the U.S.
5 government to start the coup d'etat. He also outlined three
6 general ideas, this was the first time that a leader had
7 mentioned the possibility of assassination. This assassination
8 was not of Diem. This was -- if they could not do anything, it
9 would be the elimination of Ngo Dien Can who was the war lord
10 in central Vietnam and Ngo Dien Nhu.

11 At that time, General Minh did say that one of the alter-
12 native means was to eliminate Can and Nhu and keep Diem. That
13 was one of the alternatives.

14 Senator Baker. Did they ask you for any support in
15 eliminating either of these people?

16 Mr. Conain. No, sir. I had never, and even right up
17 to the very end, I had never been asked for any resources
18 whatsoever to help or to aid in the elimination of any individual.

19 Senator Tower. This was developed in some considerable
20 detail by Mr. Colby this morning and you might be interested
21 in reading the transcript.

22 Mr. Kirbow. I think, having interrupted you, appropriately,
23 Mr. Conain, could I ask you too, you have placed, or penned
24 a paper, made a chronology of all of the events immediately
25 preceding and after the coup d'etat.

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Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Mr. Kirbow. Do you have a copy of that there before you?

Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

Mr. Kirbow. And you have looked at the original, which I hold here?

Mr. Conein. Yes, I have it here.

Mr. Kirbow. This has been marked, Mr. Chairman, as Conein Exhibit No. 1 and I ask at this time that the entire document, as best evidence of what transpired at the time, be placed in the record for future use by the Committee.

Senator Tower. Without objection.

(The document referred to was marked as Conein Exhibit No. 1 for identification.)

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1 Mr. Kirbow. Please go ahead, Mr. Conein, with your
2 summary.

3 Mr. Conein. To answer your question on this, I have the
4 document. This is my after action report that I wrote after
5 the coup d'etat.

6 In this, it says: "Big Minh did not expect U.S. government
7 support for himself or his colleagues for a coup d'etat but did
8 need U.S. government assurances that U.S. government would not
9 attempt to thwart his plans. Minh stated the need for continu-
10 ation of American military and economic aid at the present
11 level.

12 "Minh outlined three plans under consideration by the Gen-
13 erals: to assassinate Ngo Dien Nhu and Ngo Dien Can and to
14 keep President Diem in office. Two, have the military units
15 go into dissidence against the government of Vietnam, encircle
16 and isolate Saigon. Three, direct military action against the
17 military units in Saigon."

18 Mr. Kirbow. Thank you.

19 Would you go ahead with your summary, please?

20 Mr. Conein. Under instructions of the Ambassador, I
21 accelerated my contacts in monitoring Hue and reported back
22 all times exactly what the conversations were. Sometimes I had
23 as many as two or three meetings. Primarily my meetings were
24 with General Don, who was the organizer in his position of
25 getting the commanders of different military units committed

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1 to the coup.

2 You must understand also, gentlemen, that there were not
3 one coup plan. There were several. The problem that was facing
4 the people who were making assessments of this was which one
5 had the most likely chance of succeeding? We were at the point
6 of no return. There was no chance of pulling back, because
7 there was going to be a coup. The best thing to do was to
8 monitor and keep the U.S. government advised of who the principal
9 players were and what their intentions were then and in the
10 future.

11 It was an impossible situation, and also during this time
12 when it was getting down to the critical element in October, they
13 had to have assurances, the Generals had to have assurances,
14 that I was speaking for the Ambassador. Several attempts were
15 made to get these assurances, and it was practically impossible
16 because of security around the Generals, who were already
17 suspect, it was almost impossible for anybody to approach them
18 at a reception, although they had intended to do this.

19 So it was arranged that the Ambassador did give the
20 proper assurances that I was speaking for him and that I was
21 acting upon his orders.

22 Mr. Kirbow. Now that was done about the 17th of October?

23 Mr. Conein. The 17th, 20th -- it was in the middle of
24 October it was assured that I was speaking for them, for the
25 Ambassador, and that I was carrying out his instructions.

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1 Mr. Kirbow. Could I call your attention to an entry in
2 that document that we discussed of 12 October where you --
3 on page 5 and ask you to elaborate for the Committee about
4 this reference to Secretary McNamara?

5 Mr. Conein. Yes.

6 Here it says that: "Captain Nguyen Quang Nguyen, Chief
7 of Operations, Armor Command, stated he was contacted by two
8 different coup groups during the week of 5-12 October; the second
9 coup group was headed by Lt. Colonel Pham Ngoc Thao" --
10 Pham Ngo Thao was an officer, extremely capable, extremely
11 brilliant. Unfortunately, he was killed later, about a year
12 and a half after the coup. He was working with the Chief of
13 the Secret Police, Dr. Tran Khiem Tuyen, T-u-y-e-n. Dr.
14 Tuyen was the head of the President Diem's Secret Police, the
15 civilian part of the Secret Police, and had been so since
16 1955, but right at the time of the coup d'etat, Ngo Diem Nhu
17 became highly suspicious of him and had appointed him as
18 Consul General in Cairo and therefore Dr. Tuyen's group, it
19 was also an important group, was left over to Colonel Tau,
20 and Colonel Tau was trying to hold together a group of dissident
21 individuals who were also making their plans based upon the
22 direction of Dr. Tuyen who unfortunately never got to Cairo,
23 but he did get as far as Hong Kong and stayed there.

24 So there were different elements contacting the same
25 group.

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1 It was absolutely necessary in the coup that the Armor was
2 in. It was necessary that the Airborne was in. It was
3 necessary that the proper military units, it was also necessary
4 that the Air Force was in.

5 Now, the opposition forces were the Praetorian Guards,
6 the Special Forces, and the Palace Guards, very well-equipped
7 and extremely well-armed and they were in Saigon. This
8 was the danger, because to make a confrontation directly in
9 that city would have blown the hell out of the city the way
10 these people shoot, I'm sorry to say. You have to have a truck
11 of ammunition for each rifle that they shoot.

12 Mr. Kirbow. During this period of October or about that
13 time, were you aware of the requests that were being made on
14 the Ambassador and the Chief of Station to attempt to obtain
15 detailed plans of the coup from --

16 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

17 Mr. Kirbow. Were you instructed to take care of that?

18 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

19 The request that had been made -- I assumed, I learned
20 later on, I learned later on that they were being made by
21 Washington, I learned that they were made by Washington --
22 was to have complete detail of the military plan, the political
23 plan and their ideas for the future.

24 When I was talking at meetings -- now, I didn't go to
25 meetings like here, gentlemen; I had to sneak around and meet

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1 in a dentist's office and even had to have some work done on
 2 my teeth so that they could see that I had reason -- I mean,
 3 that's an example. I had to sneak around, as I had a very high
 4 profile in Vietnam, sort of cover my tracks of why I was meeting
 5 and talking to these different individuals.

6 And I was told to try to procure these plans. I was
 7 promised these plans, and they had a coup committee, and I
 8 learned afterwards, I didn't know it at the time, that there
 9 was already dissidence within the coup group, the people who
 10 were going to pull the coup, and one General didn't like the
 11 other General. The best way I can describe it, if you had
 12 three Vietnamese Generals sitting and talking to you, one
 13 General would walk out of the room to go to the john, two of
 14 them would tell you, don't trust that one and finally the one
 15 who would outwait the other two and there would be one left,
 16 and he would say, don't trust those two. So it was a very
 17 difficult situation, gentlemen. It was not one of these things
 18 that you think just ran along very smoothly.

19 It looks good in a report, but the frustrations of trying
 20 to get the man to give you the things that he had promised
 21 you, to try to deal with different personalities through one
 22 man or two men, to get, was practically impossible.

23 In the latter part of October, as I say, I think that the
 24 people back here in Washington figured out that I was being
 25 set up for a patsy and there was a possibility that it would be

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1 highly embarrassing for the United States government in case
2 that it was found out that I had been set up as a patsy. They
3 made a recommendation that somebody more senior to me and with
4 extensive military backgrounds should take over from me.

5 Senator Baker. Well, Mr. Chairman, why -- maybe this was
6 covered earlier -- but why did you say you were being set
7 up?

8 Mr. Conein. No, somebody back here.

9 Senator Schweiker. Why?

10 Mr. Conein. Why? Because they couldn't understand why
11 I was getting all of the information. Obviously, if I'm getting
12 this information of when we're going to plan and what is going
13 to happen, what units are going to be, obviously somebody is
14 setting me up for a patsy and would blame the United States
15 government.

16 Senator Baker. Who made that determination?

17 Mr. Conein. The people back here thought I was being set
18 up for a patsy, so they sent a message to the Ambassador and
19 recommended that a very capable officer and a personal friend
20 of mine, General Dick Stillwell, would take over instead of
21 me. But when this was brought up to General Don and the coup
22 members, they said, no, we trust Conein, we don't want anybody
23 else. So I continued.

24 There was a plan to transfer me at the last moment. I wish
25 they had. I wouldn't be here today, there would be somebody

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1 Senator Baker. I have a cable to Saigon from McGeorge
 2 Bundy to Lodge, I guess it is 24 October. It says: "Eyes
 3 only to Lodge and Harkins from Bundy. There may be danger.
 4 Nhu attempting entrapment through Don's approaches to Conein.
 5 Feel quite strongly that Lodge and Harkins can stand back from
 6 any nonessential involvement. It seems wise to maintain close
 7 control over meetings between Don and Conein."

8 Is that the message that activated the disengagement?
 9 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

10 Senator Schweiker. Was the other telegram we heard this
 11 morning related to this at all, or was that a different time
 12 sequence, whereby we were warned that we wanted to have nothing
 13 to do with anything that smacked of assassination?

14 Mr. Schwarz. That is right in the same time period.

15 Senator Schweiker. Was that part of the patsy concern?

16 Mr. Conein. Oh, you're talking about that, on the 5th of
 17 October, sir, or on the 4th. There is one thing that you
 18 misunderstand. There might be a twenty-four hour difference
 19 because we cross the international dateline, so I might say
 20 the 3rd and it would be the 4th.

21 Senator Schweiker. How does that wire fit into what we
 22 are talking about?

23 Mr. Conein. All right, on the 5th of October meeting
 24 between myself and General Big Minh, Duong Van Minh, at his
 25 headquarters, at this point, Minh stated, and I read this over,

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1 and outlined three plans under consideration by the Generals
2 to assassinate Ngo Dien Nhu and Ngo Dien Can and to keep
3 President Diem in office.

4 When I reported this to the Ambassador, we had at that
5 time an Acting Chief of Station by the name of ⁰⁶ ~~David Smith~~. He,
6 on his own, talked to the Ambassador and made a reference that
7 we should not -- I didn't know this, but that we should not
8 eliminate the possibility of the assassination of Ngo Dien Can
9 and Ngo Dien Nhu, that this might preclude bloodshed in Saigon.

10 He was, if I recall properly, quite severely reprimanded
11 by then-Director John McCone.

12 Senator Schweiker. Well, McCone wired --

13 Senator Tower. That is what triggered the Colby wire back
14 there, or McCone, which Colby actually sent.

15 Mr. Schwarz. Are you testifying now from your review of
16 the documents, or from what you knew at the time?

17 Mr. Conein. I am testifying from a review of my after
18 action report.

19 Mr. Schwarz. But your after action report does not mention
20 the McCone cable.

21 Mr. Conein. No. In my after action report there were a
22 lot of things left out. It would have to be a book, sir.

23 Mr. Schwarz. At the time, did you know of the McCone
24 cable?

25 Mr. Conein. I did not know, sir.

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1 Mr. Schwarz. The substance of it was not transmitted to
2 you either?

3 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

4 Mr. Schwarz. So to make that perfectly clear on the
5 record --

6 Senator Schweiker. The substance of it was not?

7 Mr. Conein. The substance of my stating the options, that
8 I knew.

9 Mr. Schwarz. You knew that had been communicated to us?

10 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

11 Senator Schweiker. But you did not know what option had
12 been eliminated?

13 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

14 Mr. Schwarz. You were not told?

15 Senator Schweiker. And yet you were the key guy in the
16 coup?

17 Mr. Conein. I was not told at that point. I was told
18 later on about assassinations. I can't recall if it was around
19 the 20th of October or when.

20 Mr. Schwarz. You were told by whom?

21 Senator Schweiker. What by whom?

22 Mr. Conein. By Ambassador Lodge that we would not tolerate
23 or would not condone any assassination.

24 Senator Schweiker. Was that within the same timeframe?

25 Mr. Conein. That was within a two-week timeframe, yes, sir.

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1 Senator Schweiker. And they were your instructions then?

2 Mr. Conein. They were my instructions then, sir.

3 Mr. Schwarz. How did he convey that to you? Did he do it
4 by showing you a cable, or orally, or what fashion?

5 Mr. Conein. No, he told this to me on a subsequent meeting
6 that I had with the Generals, sir.

7 Mr. Schwarz. Did he instruct you to tell the Generals
8 that the United States opposed assassination?

9 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

10 Senator Schweiker. And did you?

11 Mr. Conein. /Yes, sir.

12 Senator Schweiker. And what was their reaction to that?

13 Mr. Conein. The reaction was just, okay.

14 We're not talking now about a businesslike way of doing
15 things. All right, you don't want it like that? Well, we'll
16 do it our own way anyway. They didn't say that, you know.

17 Senator Schweiker. That's what you got?

18 Mr. Conein. They conveyed it, all right, you don't like it,
19 we won't talk about it anymore.

20 Mr. Schwarz. Does your after action report say that you
21 passed that message on to Big Minh?

22 Mr. Conein. I don't recall -- no, it doesn't. I think
23 that -- all right, the report -- I did not pass it to Big Minh.
24 I passed it to Don.

25 Mr. Schwarz. Does your after action report say that?

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1 Mr. Conein. No, it does not.

2 Mr. Schwarz. Does your action report describe the meeting
3 which you had with Don in which you say that you did pass it
4 to him?

5 Mr. Conein. It describes a meeting which I had with Don
6 which I believe was on the 24th in which this was brought up.
7 It was in the airport at 8:00 o'clock in the morning which
8 confirmed that General Harkins had been informed -- had told
9 General Don or told the Generals, I don't know which one he
10 had told, that they would not support the coup and Don told
11 me that all plans were complete and had been checked and
12 rechecked, and it was at this point that I said, you know, they
13 don't go for this knocking off.

14 Mr. Schwarz. Well, the action report has about twenty-five
15 lines on that meeting?

16 Mr. Conein. No, sir, it has about fifteen.

17 Mr. Schwarz. Page 7, are we looking at the same --

18 Mr. Conein. We are looking now at page 6. It was at
19 that point.

20 tap 2a Now the second meeting of that day was when I was pressing
21 General Don, I was more interested in the political plans than
22 I was of the actual goings on. This was a request that had
23 been levied on me by Washington, and what I wanted to do more
24 than anything else is get before it happened what their political
25 plans were.

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1 Mr. Kirbow. Mr. Conein, is there any doubt in your mind
2 that you in some way, conveyed to either Don or Big Minh the
3 Ambassador's position regarding assassination?

4 Mr. Conein. Oh, I conveyed it to Don that they didn't go
5 for it. That is all.

6 Mr. Schwarz. Why didn't you put that in the action report
7 which you made up in 1963?

8 Mr. Conein. I never thought I'd come up here, sir, I'll
9 tell you truthfully. I never thought I'd come up here and be
10 asked that specific question, so there are some things left
11 out of my after action report, such as when we drank beer
12 together or something like that. I left a few things out.

13 But this -- I never thought I would be here answering that
14 specific question. If I had known that then, I assure you it
15 would have been in there in capital letters.

16 Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, can I ask one general ques-
17 tion?

18 Senator Tower. Senator Baker.

19 Senator Baker. I apologize, I am sure that this must
20 have been covered in previous testimony, but Mr. Conein, what
21 did you conceive your job to be in Vietnam at this time?

22 Mr. Conein. My job was to convey the orders from my
23 Ambassador and the instructions from my Ambassador to the
24 people who were planning the coup, to monitor those individuals
25 who were planning the coup, to get as much information so that

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1 our government would not be caught with their pants down.

2 Senator Baker. Did you, in fact, agree not to thwart

3 the coup and in fact to supply economic and military assistance

4 if the coup succeeded?

5 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, I did.

6 Senator Huddleston. May I expand on that just a moment?

7 Senator Tower. Senator Huddleston?

8 Senator Huddleston. Did you conceive your objective to

9 be to encourage or promote the coup?

10 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

11 Senator Baker. Did you conceive it to be to promote a

12 coup but to preserve deniability?

13 Mr. Conein. No, sir. I did not see that I was to promote

14 a coup. The coup was going to happen.

15 Senator Huddleston. You were just an observer?

16 Mr. Conein. I was an observer and I was a liaison between

17 my government and the people who were plotting the coup.

18 Senator Mondale. Did you discuss the possibility of

19 discouraging the coup?

20 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

21 Senator Mondale. Why?

22 Mr. Conein. Because in the monitoring of an incident,

23 if you start in a negative--I did not, for example, encourage

24 them nor did I discourage them in the sense of answering

25 your question, sir. But I did not go in and say, oh, I think

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1 this is bad, oh, I think this is awful on everything that they
2 said, because I would then be cut off and be blinded.

3 Senator Mondale. I understand that, but when you met with
4 them as you did --

5 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

6 Senator Mondale. -- when you assured them that were there
7 a coup they would be assured of support, were you not in fact
8 encouraging the coup even though you say you were neutral, but
9 if you do it, these things will happen?

10 . Senator Schweiker. Senator Mondale, you missed -- there
11 was a wire this morning clearly establishing the State Depart-
12 ment passed on instructions to go ahead and have a coup, and
13 that was the order of the day.

14 Senator Tower. I think to clarify this --

15 Senator Mondale. Is that the Hillsman --

16 Senator Schweiker. The Hyannis Port wire.

17 Senator Mondale. May I look at that wire?

18 Senator Schweiker. Just show it to Senator Mondale, that's
19 all.

20 Senator Tower. What was brought out this morning was that
21 the CIA and DOD took an official position in opposition to
22 topple Diem, but the State Department took a contrary view that
23 Diem had to go and their function in carrying out national
24 policy was to inform them.

25 Incidentally, we had lifted PL 480, the

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1 commercial import program to show our displeasure at the Diem
2 government. What they were doing was telling the plotters that
3 if they were successful that this would be restored.

4 Is this essentially correct, Mr. Conein?

5 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

6 Sir, when I did receive the information on the 24th or 26th,
7 I forget the date, August, which was the famous Hillsman
8 cable, I conveyed the points of that message to the coup
9 plotters. I did not take those back at all during any time.

10 Senator Huddleston. One other question that Mr. Colby
11 answered this morning, but I'd like your opinion, if there had
12 been no interest in the United States in deposing Diem, would
13 there have been a coup?

14 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

15 Senator Huddleston. You think they were going ahead?

16 Mr. Conein. I think there would have been, sir. The
17 catalyst that started that was what happened between the
18 Buddhists --

19 Senator Schweiker. Who started the Buddhist thing?

20 Which --

21 Mr. Conein. The Diem government.

22 Senator Schweiker. And why, knowing what you assessed,
23 which was they were a neutral element and all of a sudden
24 they're antagonistic politically, why did they do it?

25 Mr. Conein. This I never could understand. I was up there

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1 the day before. Now you're asking for my opinion.

2 My opinion was that they had a chance to get out of it
3 and get out of it very gracefully within the first two weeks
4 after the 8th of May incident in Hue by meeting the demands of
5 paying off the families of those people who were killed when
6 the military attacked the pagodas in Hue. If this would have
7 been done, I think that we would have been much better off.

8 Again, this is my personal opinion.

9 Senator Schweiker. If I can interrupt for one more
10 minute --

11 Senator Huddleston. Go right ahead.

12 Senator Schweiker. You said that you thought this was a
13 key, did I understand, sort of the turning point of the war?

14 Mr. Conein. No, sir. This was the turning point of the
15 political situation, sir.

16 Senator Schweiker. I see.

17 Mr. Conein. Not the war.

18 Senator Schweiker. But it could have subsequently affected
19 the outcome of the war by messing up the stability of the
20 political establishment, is that right?

21 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

22 Senator Schweiker. Thank you.

23 Senator Huddleston. You mentioned that Madam Nhu had been
24 making some inflammatory statements that were unsettling to the
25 people. Were you referring to the people of Vietnam or the

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1 people of the United States?

2 I recall some very anti-Buddhist statements that she was
3 making, something to the effect, why not let them burn
4 themselves up, or whatever?

5 Mr. Conein. Yes.

6 Senator Huddleston. Very unsympathetic.

7 Mr. Conein. Very unsympathetic. This upsets -- the reasons
8 being, the Buddhists are not --

9 Senator Huddleston. Are you referring to the Vietnamese
10 people?

11 Mr. Conein. I am referring to the Vietnamese people.

12 The people themselves, they claim to be 80 percent Buddhist.

13 What happened, people who had never gone to a pagoda after
14 she started making statements to the effect that she'd like to
15 furnish some mustard at a bonzes barbecue, or something to
16 that effect, this made people want to identify themselves
17 against the regime and so they would go.

18 Senator Huddleston. And this was the principal reason that
19 the United States felt that they had to get rid of the regime,
20 or one of the reasons?

21 Mr. Conein. Oh, I don't know what we were thinking back
22 here. I was out there. But it was an intolerable situation
23 where you had a President who had a Catholic regime and I
24 happen to be Catholic myself, sir, but who were being oppressive
25 against another religious group in the middle of a war.

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1 Senator Huddleston. And you think that was the catalyst
2 that got the coup started?

3 Mr. Conain. This was the action I think was the catalyst
4 that brought down the Diem regime.

5 Mr. Kirbow. Mr. Conain, was it the general opinion among
6 you and your associates in the Agency and the State Department
7 officials there, the country team, so to speak, that the true
8 power in the government at that time was the brother and his
9 wife or the two brothers and not Diem?

10 Mr. Conain. Well, yes, sir. What had happened was, it
11 was becoming obvious to those people who were keeping abreast
12 of the situation, not only within the State Department, but
13 also within USAID and JUSPOW and other government entities
14 out there that Diem had been out of touch with reality and was
15 not getting the true facts, that everything was being channeled
16 through his brother Nhu. The control of the Republican
17 Youths, which was based on the Hitlerian Youths, with nice
18 blue uniforms, Madam Nhu was the Chief of the Woman's Solidarity
19 Movement, they had the Female Republican Youths, they controlled
20 the civil guards, they controlled the praetorian guards, the
21 Special Forces, they controlled a vast Secret Police mechanism
22 and all of this, including the police, was all under one man's
23 control. This was Ngo Dien Nhu.

24 In central Vietnam, Ngo Dien Can, the brother of Ngo Dien
25 Diem, was the actual war lord and nothing happened up there

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1 without his personal approval.

2 So what you had, you had a Catholic regime superimposed
3 and running all of the political, economic and military entities
4 in the nation and then suppressing what, quote/unquote, was
5 considered the majority religious group in the country.

6 Senator Schweiker. The Buddhists?

7 Mr. Conein. The Buddhists.

8 Senator Tower. Weren't the Buddhists themselves fraction-
9 alized?

10 Mr. Conein. Sir?

11 Senator Tower. Weren't there two or three different
12 principal sects of the Buddhists?

13 Mr. Conein. Oh, there were many principal sects of the
14 Buddhists. There were three or four different sects, of
15 course.

16 Senator Tower. Was this just one sect they were dealing
17 with, or all of them?

18 Mr. Conein. Once this happened that there was an attack
19 on the pagodas in Hue and followed up by an attack in August
20 on the pagodas in Saigon, this consolidated all the factions
21 of the Buddhists, so they became a political entity which they
22 had never been before.

23 Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, we have a vote in progress.

24 Senator Mondale. Can I ask one question?

25 Your background in Vietnam went back many years. You knew

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1 many of these later leaders, Generals, you were working with
2 much earlier in their careers.

3 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

4 Senator Mondale. And you spoke Vietnamese?

5 Mr. Conein. I spoke it very badly, but I spoke it. I
6 spoke French fluently.

7 Senator Mondale. But you were picked, I gather, for this
8 liaison work because of this unique, longstanding personal
9 relationship with these people.

10 Mr. Conein. I assume so. I hope things work that way,
11 Senator.

12 Senator Mondale. Well, that was the idea, and then you
13 met with them frequently?

14 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

15 Senator Mondale. And during those occasions when they
16 were discussing their feelings about Diem and those around him
17 and the need for change, the coup and so on, did they bring
18 up assassinations as a possibility?

19 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

20 Senator Mondale. They never did that?

21 Mr. Conein. The only time that assassination was brought
22 up was at the meeting I had with Big Minh as one of the options
23 that he was considering, in October of 1963.

24 Senator Mondale. Was that the one where he was considering
25 Nhu and someone else?

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Mr. Conain. Yes, sir.

Senator Mondale. But not Diem?

Mr. Conain. Not Diem, yes, sir.

Senator Mondale. But they never once suggested assassina-
tion of Diem while you were there?

Mr. Conain. No, sir, not at that time.

Senator Tower. Gentlemen, why don't we suspend and all go
vote and come back?

(A brief recess was taken at 3:26 p.m.)

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1 Senator Tower. Let me suggest to the Committee that we
 2 allow Mr. Conein to proceed with his summary and then, before
 3 we ask questions, because I think some of the questions might
 4 be in that summary and it might allow us to get through our
 5 business in a little more orderly fashion.

6) So if you would proceed, Mr. Conein.

7 Mr. Conein. Thank you, sir.

8 In the latter part of October, specifically the 28th of
 9 October, I was informed by General Don to convey to the
 10 Ambassador, Ambassador Lodge, that they were ready to have a
 11 coup and that one, that I was to stay home and await further
 12 orders, that the coup would be accomplished before the 2nd
 13 of November.

14 At that time, Ambassador Lodge was preparing to return
 15 to the United States for consultation with the President of
 16 the United States. Ambassador Lodge made that known to me that
 17 he was coming back to the United States.

18 General Don requested that I convey to the Ambassador that
 19 he do not change his plans to leave on the 31st of October to
 20 come back for consultation to the United States because if he
 21 did change his plans that this might be a signal to the President
 22 and Nhu that something was going on.

23 I don't know why, but the plans were changed and Admiral
 24 Felt, CINCPAC Commander, came to Vietnam and landed and had an
 25 interview with the President that morning, the day that the coup

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1 was going, or coming off.

2 The coup started I believe here on the 31st. It was the
3 1st of November in Saigon. At approximately noon on the
4 1st of November, I received an emissary telling me that I am to
5 move. I was changing into uniform when the second emissary came
6 and said that I was to proceed immediately per previously
7 arranged plans to the Joint General Staff Headquarters.

8 I had at that time a military jeep, a Vietnamese driver,
9 two radio sets, a bag, an extra-large briefcase, and I was
10 armed with a .38 revolver. This was for my own personal
11 protection because it was a short-nosed revolver, and you
12 couldn't hit anything further than two feet away from you.

13 My driver, who was a Vietnamese sergeant who had been
14 detailed to me by the military, was armed with a .45.

15 We proceeded from my residence and about 1:00 o'clock in
16 the afternoon and on the way to -- or the moment I got the
17 signal that the coup was on, I got onto my radio sets and
18 alerted the Embassy through a voice code which I had and another
19 voice code which had been prearranged, to let them know I was
20 safe.

21 I proceeded to the General Staff Headquarters, and there
22 was firing going on between the Special Forces unit that was
23 right next to the General Staff Headquarters and some of the
24 elements, the troop elements, at the General Staff Headquarters.

25 I arrived at the General Staff Headquarters approximately

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1 3:30 in the afternoon. The coup was then on.

2 At the General Staff Headquarters there was General Big
3 Minh, General Little Minh, General Don, General Khiem, General
4 Le Van Kim, Colonel Lam -- well, a lot of military officers.
5 Most of them were of the General Staff and no unit commanders
6 themselves.

7 Upon arrival I was with the Generals and they told me,
8 Big Minh told me that they only had a couple of officers that
9 they were in doubt of who had not committed themselves yet, but
10 that it was in progress. They started the attack and it kept
11 on going about 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon -- I have it here
12 in my notes, but I'm trying to recall it without referring to
13 my notes -- our first call came in, maybe 3:00 or 4:00 o'clock
14 in the afternoon, when they called President Diem and asked
15 him to surrender and if he would surrender that they would give
16 him sanctuary and allow him to escape from the country.

17 This was refused.

18 About the same time or a little afterwards, there was the
19 communications between Ambassador Lodge and President Diem. I
20 was in both radio and telephonic contact with the Embassy and
21 keeping them posted of the units, the personalities and what
22 was transpiring. I was to convey, one of the first messages I
23 was to convey was that they did not want any U.S. military
24 officer or advisor with any of the attacking units. They did
25 not want any American participation within the coup.

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1 They automatically closed down the airport as they always
 2 do in a coup and proceeded to attack the Central Police
 3 Headquarters, take over the radio station, and get into the
 4 PTT which controlled the communications.

5 This was very unfortunate, because when they did this --
 6 prior to the coup they had taken out the, I don't know, the
 7 telephone terminals and in the process, instead of leaving my
 8 telephone into my home open they had disconnected it. They
 9 would only leave the Embassy lines open so therefore I was not
 10 warned until practically the last minute to proceed. They had
 11 been trying to get ahold of me since about an hour before they
 12 finally got in contact with me.

13 And the coup, different units or different elements, had
 14 committed themselves and had progressed. We were not sure till
 15 about 1:00 o'clock the following morning that the coup had
 16 been successful. At that time, it became quite obvious. There
 17 had been three or four communications between President Diem,
 18 Ngo Dien Nhu, with the General Officers, each time Diem refused
 19 to speak to Big Minh.

20 And on several occasions I would warn the Embassy that
 21 certain shellings were going to take place, or bombings by
 22 aircraft was going to take place at a certain time, to alert
 23 American personnel who might be living around the area to watch
 24 out or stay under cover because they were firing 105's in the
 25 center of the city.

1 We had no American casualty, wounded or killed, during this
2 coup. I am talking from the American side, now. The Vietnamese
3 suffered about 100 dead.

4 At about 6:00 o'clock the following morning -- this is the
5 part where it gets to the point where what we are discussing is
6 most important -- about 6:00 o'clock in the morning just as dawn
7 was coming up, all of the officers that were in the coup and some
8 hangers on who, I don't know how they got there, they were all
9 standing out, including myself, we were standing out on the patio
10 of the Joint General Staff Headquarters. At that time, there
11 had been some discussion going on among the Generals and
12 Colonals who were there about what they were going to do now.

13 I only heard of one officer who was quite adamant about
14 the elimination of President Diem at that time. This officer,
15 who is now dead, a General by the name of Le, L-e, who was a
16 former Chief of Police under Diem in 1955 or '56. He was for
17 the killing of Diem.

18 At about 6:40 or 6:30 or 6:40, a telephone call came in
19 from Diem. We still assumed that Diem was at Gailong Palace --
20 G-a-i-l-o-n-g. And it was at this point that Diem talked to
21 Big Minh for the first time.

22 He asked for full honors if -- he wanted to capitulate,
23 but he wanted to have full honors. Big Minh replied to the
24 President that he could not guarantee full honors, if and
25 during the time that Vietnamese were still killing one another.

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1 Diem, something to the effect, said that he would order
 2 cease fire at the Palace. My recollection is it was about 10
 3 minutes to 7:00, maybe 10 minutes to 8:00. Now I had been up
 4 all night long, I had been working with this for a long time,
 5 so I can't say the time exactly, but it was around that time.

6 There was a cease fire and the people quit firing. At this
 7 stage, there were four armored cars and 113's as an escort of
 8 military police proceeded immediately from the Joint General
 9 Staff Headquarters toward Gailong Palace. Big Minh, with his
 10 aide, Captain Nhung, got into a sedan and with MTS Corps went
 11 out the back road from the General Staff Headquarters toward
 12 the back of the golf course and took a different road from the
 13 armored cars that went down Cong Le.

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14 The armored column was commanded by a Major Bang -- B-a-n-
 15 g -- who had been a former Province Chief at Da Lac Province.

16 They proceeded to the Palace and they started searching
 17 the place. About an hour later -- and this is the part that is
 18 important -- when Big Minh left, General Don and General Khien
 19 and Le Van Kim were still at the General Staff Headquarters; so
 20 was I. At this point, they proceeded to take the pictures of
 21 Diem down, cover the statue that was out in front of the General
 22 Staff Headquarters and they took all telephone lines out and
 23 reverted to radio communication, and I would like to put one
 24 thing into place. Between the telephone call at 6:10 or 6:20
 25 in the morning and the second telephone call which came at 10

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1 minutes to 7:00 from Diem, I was asked by Big Minh and Don to
2 get an aircraft. I called the Embassy -- I still had telephone
3 communication -- I called the Embassy and I spoke to Mr. ~~SMUCK~~ 06
4 ~~SMUCK~~ who was then Acting Chief of Station and who had been up
5 all night also. And I told them that it looked like Diem and
6 Nhu were going to surrender and that I needed an aircraft.

7 I was reminded that the United States government had no
8 intention of immediately recognizing the new regime, or the
9 junta; secondly, that President Diem would be taken to the
10 first country that offered him asylum; thirdly, that they did
11 not want the aircraft to land in a country other than the
12 country that was going to give asylum. For example, and I am
13 just setting this as an example, assume that France was the
14 first country to grant President Diem asylum. They did not want
15 an aircraft that would have to land, say in Delhi, or Carachi
16 or Teiran or anyplace else where Diem would get out and start
17 forming a government in exile.

18 Senator Baker. Was there any airplane that would fly that
19 far?

20 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir. We had C-130's. They could not
21 fly that far. We had KC-135's, and I was told that they could
22 not get an aircraft for twenty-four hours, therefore it was un-
23 and the nearest KC-135 was in Guam, and they could not get an
24 aircraft for twenty-four hours.

25 I informed both General Minh and General Don that I could

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1 not get an aircraft for twenty-four hours, and -- so when Big
2 Minh had gone, General Don was preparing for the reception of
3 the President and his brother. We started -- I wasn't doing it,
4 but we got troops in and we cleaned up the whole area, policed
5 it out and brought in a large table with green felt on it and
6 they were preparing to call in the Press so that they would have
7 coverage of Diem resigning.

8 Vice President Tho -- T-h-o -- was to be the new Premier
9 of the government and he was to accept the resignation and he
10 would then become the head of the government.

11 The thing, the most important fact that they were afraid
12 of was that they would not be accepted to other governments,
13 would not be recognized, so they wanted a legal transition.
14 Also, they prepared to house both Diem and Nhu in the General
15 Staff Headquarters under proper security. That was the way it
16 was at the time I departed, when they said -- General Don told
17 me they were bringing in the Press and I saw movie cameras and
18 everything coming in, and I said this is the time for me to get
19 out, and I went home.

20 I got home, by then my telephone was re-established and I
21 got a telephone call, come to the Embassy. I went to the
22 Embassy and I was informed that I had to find Diem. I was tired
23 and fed up and I said, who gave those orders. They let me know
24 that those orders came from the President of the United States.

25 So I went back out to the General Staff Headquarters,

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1 getting there about 10:15, 10:30 in the morning. In the meantime,
 2 they had moved the group from the General Staff Headquarters to
 3 the office upstairs and the Officer's Club at the General Staff
 4 Headquarters which was right off of the entrance to the General
 5 Staff Headquarters.

6 The Ministers of the former government were all, except
 7 one, present and had turned over to the junta, and they were in
 8 the process of being talked to and the questioning them and what
 9 have you. I walked in and I saw General Big Minh -- I saw all
 10 the Generals, everybody else, but I saw General Big Minh's aide,
 11 because General Big Minh and Le Van Kim were talking to Minis-
 12 ters, to former Ministers of the government.

13 I told the aide that I wanted to talk to Big Minh and he
 14 said, what it is about, and I said I wanted to know where Diem
 15 was. Big Minh came over and I explained to him that it was
 16 important to the United States government to know the location
 17 of President Diem. Big Minh told me they committed suicide.

18 I looked at him, and I said, where. He said they were in
 19 the Catholic Church at Cho Long, and they committed suicide.

20 I think I lost my cool at that point, because I think I
 21 told Big Minh, look, you're a Buddhist, I'm a Catholic. If they
 22 committed suicide at that church and the priest holds Mass
 23 tonight, that story won't hold water. I said, where are they?

24 He said they are at the General Staff Headquarters, behind
 25 the General Staff Headquarters, did I want to see them. And

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1 said no. He said, why not? And I said, well, if by chance one
2 of a million of the people believe you that they committed
3 suicide in Church and I see that they have not committed suicide
4 and I know differently, then if it ever leaks out, I am in
5 trouble. I refused to be a witness to it.

6 They had been killed.

7 I returned to the Embassy and so reported and a message
8 was sent back to Washington immediately that they were dead,
9 that they were at the General Staff Headquarters.

10 Mr. Kirbow. Excuse me, Mr. Conein. Did you report that
11 they had committed suicide as they had told you at the Embassy
12 or did you report what you actually knew?

13 Mr. Conein. I reported exactly what I said, that I was
14 told that they committed suicide but I refused to witness how
15 they had died, because I didn't want to get myself involved
16 in their death, period.

17 Senator Baker. Mr. Chairman, I'm not quite sure how you
18 can confirm or deny how they could have committed suicide in
19 the church if their bodies were at the General Staff Head-
20 quarters?

21 Mr. Conein. Well according to the original story that they
22 gave out that they both committed suicide in the church --

23 Senator Baker. How could you have told or not told by
24 looking at the bodies? What difference would it have made?

25 Mr. Conein. I know the Vietnamese well enough, Senator,

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1 that they leave a lot of marks on people.

2 Senator Baker. So you don't have any doubt in your mind?

3 Mr. Conein. Oh, no, sir.

4 Mr. Kirbow. Did you later see the pictures of the body?

5 Mr. Conein. I saw the pictures in, I think, a few days
6 afterwards. I saw the pictures of it and then there were the
7 pictures of it being handed around.

8 Senator Mondale. Did they tell you that they had taken
9 poison?

10 Mr. Conein. Well, no, they just told me that they had
11 committed suicide. I didn't want to delve into it.

12 Mr. Kirbow. Would you tell the committee the nature of the
13 apparent deaths from the photographs?

14 Mr. Conein. Oh, yes. Diem had been shot and he had a
15 bloody face and his head was turned over to one side and it was
16 obvious that his hands had been tied behind his back.

17 Ngo Diem Nhu had multiple wounds and also you could tell
18 that he had been stabbed many times, besides being shot. You
19 could tell, and by the running of the blood.

20 Mr. Kirbow. Did you later determine in some manner to your
21 own knowledge how the deaths actually occurred?

22 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

23 Mr. Kirbow. Would you tell the Committee?

24 Mr. Conein. This is something I swore I would never tell.
25 It appeared, first of all, when Diem and Nhu were going to

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1 make confessions at the church, they were using a telephone line
2 which they could contact, through the Palace switchboard, so it
3 would appear that they were still in the Palace and someone, I
4 don't know who, reported where they were.

5 Senator Tower. So they were actually in the church at
6 Cho Long?

7 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, they were in the church. As you
8 go in -- you don't know it, but Ngo Dien Nhu was a chain smoker,
9 continuously smoking, and he was out in the yard, the little
10 courtyard they have around the church, and he was walking around
11 and he and his brother were walking back and forth, they had
12 one aide with them.

13 Mr. Schwarz. Not in custody of the Generals?

14 Mr. Conein. Not in touch with the Generals, but somebody
15 reported it.

16 First of all, you must understand -- now this is specula-
17 tion on my part now; I'm not saying how it happened, because I
18 don't know how this part happened in fact, but they had so many
19 pictures of Diem hung up on public buildings and in every office
20 and his picture was all over, like Ho Chi Minh's picture was
21 all over Saigon now, it was all over, so therefore, he was very
22 well known, plus people had seen him, they know him, so it wasn't
23 very difficult for anybody to spot him and make a report.

24 General Mai Huu Kuan and then-Colonel, later General,
25 Duong Ngoc Lam took off with armored cars and went to the church.

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1 There is a little bit of difference of opinion as to exactly
2 what happened, as exactly what happened at the church.

3 Mai Huu Xuan reported to the President, saluted and told
4 him to get into the armored car. Ngo Dien Nhu protested and
5 asked for a sedan, and this led to an argument. Anyway, they
6 were shoved into the armored car and were told by the commander
7 of the column, who was Colonel Lam, that they had to use the
8 armored car for their physical protection.

9 Senator Tower. Was that Colonel Lam, was he later ICORPS
10 Commander?

11 Mr. Conain. No, sir, this was a different Lam. Duong
12 Ngoc Lam was a fat little guy who wore a moustache who used
13 to command the civil guard, later became a General, yes, sir,
14 but he was not the ICORPS commander. He's also dead now.

15 Anyway, they were coming back with the column, who were
16 in radio communications with Big Minh and his entourage and
17 when they found out, when Big Minh found out that they were
18 prisoners, he gave an order to his aide, Captain Nhung, and
19 Captain Nhung killed them, in the armored car. The bodies were
20 taken directly to the General Staff Headquarters and later on
21 in the afternoon they were removed from the General Staff
22 Headquarters to Clinique St. Paul.

23 Senator Tower. Were they killed right after they were put
24 into the armored car?

25 Mr. Conain. No, they were killed on the way back, when

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1 Big Minh's group, with his aide, crossed the column, halted it,
2 and Captain Nhung stepped into it and killed them.

3 Now other people who were in the armored car, I assume -- I
4 do not know who did the stabbing wounds or anything else. I do
5 know the two were killed by Captain Nhung.

6 We knew this within a matter of hours, exactly what
7 happened, and I reported it and it was reported back here at
8 Headquarters exactly what happened.

9 That is the story, sir.

10 Senator Huddleston. Do you know that Big Minh gave the
11 order that they be killed?

12 Mr. Conain. I have it on very good authority of very
13 many people that Big Minh gave the order, not only of -- one
14 thing I can say, Senator, is that I kept contact with the junta
15 until the day that the United States officially recognized the
16 South Vietnamese government. There were several countries that
17 recognized, and I was acting as the liaison officer for the
18 Ambassador to the junta during this period of approximately ten
19 days or two weeks.

20 Senator Huddleston. Is it true that Big Minh and the
21 Generals had made a definite appointment with the Generals to
22 come to the Palace, at which time President Diem would surren-
23 der?

24 Mr. Conain. No, they didn't make a definite appointment.

25 Senator Huddleston. They didn't go to the Palace expecting

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1 to find him?

2 Mr. Conein. Yes, Big Minh went by himself. He had Phen
3 Ngoc Tau who knew the Palace the best, Major Bang -- B-a-n-g --
4 who was in the armored column. I can say that about an hour
5 after they left, Major Bang came back and I asked Major Bang,
6 whom I had known up in Hanoi back in 1945, I asked him, I said,
7 what were your orders? And he said, the orders going through
8 the Palace was that we were not to fire unless we were fired
9 upon. And I said, well, did you find them? And he said, no
10 we didn't find them yet. They had not known at that time where
11 they were.

12 Senator Huddleston. They expected him to be at the Palace?

13 Mr. Conein. They expected him to be at the Palace. Every-
14 body assumed, including myself, that they were at the Palace.

15 Senator Huddleston. Is it your judgment that at that time
16 that they had expected to take them peacefully?

17 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

18 Senator Huddleston. And to send them out of the country?

19 Mr. Conein. What was going to transpire was that they were
20 going to take them peacefully. Big Minh himself, as the leader
21 of the junta, was to take escort them back to the General
22 Staff Headquarters where they would have the green table and
23 President Diem was to sign over power to the Vice President.
24 They were going to be held until I could get the aircraft, and
25 then they were going to be flown out of the country, because

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1 immediately after the signing that Diem would get through the
2 ceremony of turning over the powers to the Vice President, Tho,
3 he would ask for asylum and this would be broadcast.

4 Senator Huddleston. Then what reason do you believe that
5 Diem left the Palace? Was it to go to the church, or was he
6 really attempting to slip --

7 Mr. Conain. No, sir, we didn't find this out until
8 afterwards, because it was very baffling. I don't know how
9 they got out. Everybody talked about secret tunnels; there
10 were secret tunnels. There was a passage, because the Gailong
11 Palace -- now you have to understand that the Doc Lap Palace,
12 D-o-c L-a-p, was the Presidential Palace before the new one was
13 made, that belonged to the Emperor Bao Dai. The administrative --
14 the French Governor General's palace was in Gailong Palace.
15 When the Palace was bombed in February of '62 by the two
16 Vietnamese Air Force pilots, they moved out of that Palace and
17 took over the Gailong Palace.

18 The Gailong Palace was right behind the Saigon City Hall,
19 which was then, when it was constructed, was run by the French.
20 Well, between the Governor General's Palace, which was the
21 Gailong Palace, and the City Hall was about a half a block.
22 What they had was a passage underneath, just like you have here,
23 so that servants won't have to go out in the hot noonday sun
24 and get a paper signed, they could go underneath.

25 And what President Diem and Nhu and his aide did was to go

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1 down through that, walk out in front of the City Hall, got into
2 an automobile and drove on up to Mai Tuyen's house in Choldlon.

3 Senator Huddleston. What I'm trying to determine was what
4 their motive was? Were they in fact trying to evade being
5 apprehended, or were they going to church?

6 Mr. Conain. Sir, there are a lot of things not in this report
7 one of them is the Operation Bravo, and I hate to get into this
8 thing, Bravo I and Bravo II.

9 Senator Huddleston. All I want to know is were they trying
10 to avoid --

11 Mr. Conain. No, sir, because first of all, they thought,
12 when the coup started, that it was their coup.

13 Senator Huddleston. Well, according to other
14 information --

15 Senator Schweiker. Wait a minute. You lost me.

16 Senator Huddleston. According to other information --

17 Mr. Conain. Yes, sir.

18 Senator Huddleston. -- they had made an arrangement with
19 Big Minh that they would be at the Palace at a certain time,
20 and that Big Minh should come and take them and that they would
21 peacefully surrender and that they would be given passage out
22 of the country.

23 Now as I understand it, Big Minh and the column that you
24 talk about, the armored cars, went to the Palace with that
25 assumption they were going to be there.

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1 Mr. Consin. Yes, sir

2 Senator Huddleston. When they arrived, they were not
3 there.

4 Mr. Consin. That's right, sir.

5 Senator Huddleston. They did not know where they were?

6 Mr. Consin. No, sir.

7 Senator Huddleston. The conclusion I draw is that this
8 was a breach of faith, and that it angered the Generals, and
9 because of that, when they did find them, they killed them.
10 Now is that accurate or not?

11 Mr. Consin. That is a very accurate way of describing it,
12 the reason being is that, if I can make a personal observation,
13 Big Minh is a very proud man and those of you who have been to
14 Southeast Asia know that face is very important, and at the
15 last moment when he lost face, when he was going up there in all
16 of his splendor with a sedan and everything else to receive
17 them, this probably was one of the things that ticked him off and
18 he gave the order.

19 Senator Huddleston. Is it your opinion that if they had
20 carried out the pre-arranged plan and had surrendered that the
21 scenario would have been much as you described? That they would
22 have had the Press Conference?

23 Mr. Consin. If they had carried it out and if Big Minh
24 would have found them there would have been too many people
25 present at the Palace for them to even attempt --

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1 Senator Huddleston. That they would probably be alive
2 today?

3 Mr. Conein. They would probably be alive today. I might
4 also add that three days afterwards I was instrumental in getting
5 Ngo Dien Nhu's children out of the country.

6 Senator Tower. Senator Hart, do you want to proceed?

7 Senator Hart of Michigan. I think that clarifies it.

8 Senator Schweiker. Mr. Chairman?

9 Senator Tower. Senator Schweiker?

10 Senator Hart. Well, let me ask, the understanding that
11 at no point in the climactic days so far as you knew, was there
12 any discussion of killing Diem?

13 Mr. Conein. No, sir, there had never been any discussion
14 of any time about Diem himself being killed by anybody. I will
15 make one statement that many people -- and I'm talking about the
16 General and other people -- wanted Diem to be around. They could
17 not stand Nhu and Madam Nhu. This was an opinion of the people.

18 The Generals themselves wanted legal turnover of the
19 government. They wanted international recognition of their
20 coup. They did want that.

21 Senator Tower. Senator Schweiker?

22 Senator Schweiker. You made a point I didn't understand.
23 You said that it was Diem's own coup that he thought was
24 unfolding?

25 Mr. Conein. Yes, because I -- I actually ~~hate~~ to get in there,

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1 because it is in this report here. It is a very complicated
 2 thing and you have to understand the devious mind of an Oriental,
 3 and I'll tell you what, I spent many years out there and I still
 4 don't understand it, but I can understand why they do certain
 5 things, but don't ask me why.

6 In August of 1963, General Ton That Dinh had been Military
 7 Governor, had been appointed Military Governor of Saigon and
 8 Commander of the Third Corps. General Dinh was therefore in
 9 power and working for Ngo Dien Nhu and Ngo Dien Diem directly
 10 in August of 1963.

11 When the military curfew and Military Governor of
 12 Saigon's powers were taken away on the 18th of September of
 13 1963, Ton That Dinh considered himself the hero of Saigon. He
 14 saved the Diem regime in August.

15 He also, during that time, had made plans to have what we
 16 call Bravo I and Bravo II that Diem -- or Nhu -- would have his
 17 own coup, Diem and Nhu would go down to Vung Tau as if they
 18 were escaping and there would be immediately a countercoup put
 19 on by -- all instigated by Nhu -- a countercoup put on by Diem
 20 at the same time and bring back Nhu and Diem by popular
 21 acclimation.

22 So, in the beginning of the coup, Ton That Dinh, who was
 23 sometime erratic -- or, he's still alive; I don't want to say
 24 he's erratic -- or sometimes a little funny, very devious, he
 25 had convinced Ngo Dien Nhu that he was going to go through with

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1 this plan. So they assumed, at 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon
2 when troops were moving and everything else that it was their
3 coup. This was Ton ~~That~~ Dinh's plan..

4 What they didn't know was Ton ~~That~~ Dinh was the military
5 commander of Saigon for the coup.

6 Senator Schweiker. Double agent, as we say.

7 Mr. Conein. Well, he was triple about that time.

8 Senator Morgan. Where is he now?

9 Mr. Conein. Sir?

10 Senator Morgan. Where is he now?

11 Mr. Conein. I don't know. I do not know if he escaped
12 this last thing or not. I don't know if he got out. He was a
13 Senator.

14 Senator Huddleston. That explains it.

15 Senator Schweiker. That's why he was a triple agent.

16 Mr. Conein. He was a Senator, an elected Senator of the
17 Vietnamese and he was the military chairman of the Senate
18 Military Affairs Committee in Vietnam.

19 Senator Mondale. You had a substantial amount of money in
20 piasters in your private safe which you were asked to bring
21 with you to the Joint General Staff Headquarters, right?

22 Mr. Conein. I had, and I don't recall exactly the amount
23 of money. There is someplace somewhere an accounting of the
24 money and also the signature of General Don who received some
25 of this money. I don't recall -- and I'm telling you

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1 truthfully, I don't recall if I had 3 1/2 million or 5 million
2 piasters. I said I brought a little brown bag; it was one of
3 these diplomatic sort of courier bags and it was stuffed with
4 money.

5 I had made some certain contingency plans for my own
6 protection because it became obvious to me that if anything
7 happened that my family might suffer, and also that if the
8 Diem government found out that I was involved in a conspiracy,
9 if we may call it that, that I probably would have a very
10 efficient Vietcong incident -- in other words, I would be
11 blown up or assassinated or something like that and it would be
12 blamed on the Vietcong for doing that.

13 Therefore, I took certain precautions.

14 I had made arrangements to have one FA Special Forces
15 team available upon signal to protect my house when the coup
16 came off. I had also made arrangements to have a military jeep
17 with proper type of communications equipment so that I would,
18 no matter what happened, I would always be in communication.

19 I also --

20 Senator Mondale. Was your family with you in Saigon?

21 Mr. Consin. Yes. I had just had a daughter born three
22 months before, and one of the things I wanted was, they could
23 kill me but I didn't want my family to pay for what I did.
24 Therefore, I had one complete FA team of the Fifth Special Forces
25 at my house during the coup.

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1 I had made a contingency plan for funds. Now the amount
2 of funds -- like I tell you, I don't recall exactly how much,
3 it was 3 1/2 or 5 million piasters.

4 Senator Baker. How much is that in dollars?

5 Mr. Conain. About \$70,000. Now this is roughly, I'm
6 figuring it up now in my head, I'm not a mathematician. And
7 I took this money and put it in the bag, the brown bag, the
8 reason being that for the first twenty-four hours there were
9 two things that were vitally important. There were certain
10 units that would be diverted at the last moment. These units
11 were going to be put into a situation they did not know of, so
12 therefore they did not have the rice and the bread. That was
13 the most important thing, rice and bread.

14 The second thing was that we did not want, under any
15 circumstances, of any personality who would be shot or killed
16 during the coup that there wasn't a gesture made to pay off the
17 family immediately. This is something that you gentlemen
18 probably don't know, but there are no insurances in Vietnam in
19 the proper sense that we know of, so there's always, when some-
20 body is killed, there is a sum of money given.

21 The other thing was, we had to have volunteer medical
22 facilities available in addition to the military facilities.
23 We wanted to be sure that there were certain medical facilities
24 so that we could take care of our own wounded.

25 Well, these things have to be prepared, gentlemen, and there's

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1 wasn't a lot of money -- it was a lot of money in piasters.

2 All of these monies have been accounted for, they were
3 accounted for by me, they were signed for by the General, and --
4 for each payment. Now, I do not know where those receipts are.

5 Senator Mondale. Could I? I'm not getting at -- there's
6 no implication, I hope, about the management of money. I'm just
7 trying to find out what the money was for.

8 Mr. Conein. It was to pay for food --

9 Senator Mondale. In other words, you have something like
10 \$70,000 in piasters, give or take whatever the arithmetic, and
11 how long had you had that money?

12 Mr. Conein. I had had that money since approximately, I
13 would say around the 24th of October. I had that in a safe in
14 my house.

15 Senator Mondale. And did that money come to you through
16 the CIA?

17 Mr. Conein. I requested it from the Finance Office, yes,
18 sir.

19 Senator Mondale. He provided you the money, you brought
20 it out and kept it in your home and then when was the first call
21 for the money? Was that the day --

22 Mr. Conein. I took it with me.

23 Senator Mondale. You had it in your home?

24 Mr. Conein. Yes, I had it in my home, and when I changed
25 into uniform to go out to General Staff --

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1 Senator Mondale. But they asked you to bring money at
2 that time, did they?

3 Mr. Conein. I had made arrangements that I would bring a
4 certain sum of contingency funds.

5 Senator Mondale. With General Don?

6 Mr. Conein. With General Don.

7 Senator Mondale. He asked you to bring the money, didn't
8 he? Did I understand you to say bring as much money as you
9 could lay your hands on?

10 Mr. Conein. No, not as much money as I could. If it were
11 that, I would have taken a b-bag full. But the thing of it was,
12 it was only for a small sum of money, a contingency fund for
13 a twenty-four hour or thirty-six hour period, which I did not
14 know at that time.

15 Senator Mondale. What did you understand that money to be
16 for? For what purposes?

17 Mr. Conein. The money was to pay for those units who, at
18 the last moment, when their officers would give the order to
19 march, who had no time to get their food, to draw the supplies.

20 Senator Mondale. Anything else?

21 Mr. Conein. To pay for medical --

22 Senator Mondale. Expenses.

23 Mr. Conein. -- expenses.

24 Senator Mondale. All right.

25 Anything else?

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1 Mr. Conein. To pay the death benefits for any person,
2 you know, killed.

3 Senator Mondale. Did he tell you that's what he wanted it
4 for, or did you know that that is what it was for?

5 Mr. Conein. I knew that's what it was for.

6 Senator Tower. I would like to bring up at this point,
7 Director Colby has testified about this.

8 Mr. Schwarz. Not in the same detail.

9 Senator Tower. Not in the same detail.

10 Senator Mondale. Well, I'm sorry. I was not here this
11 morning.

12 Senator Tower. That's all right.

13 Senator Mondale. So in that sense, we were bringing,
14 through you, assets which they would use to help carry out and
15 pay the costs of the coup.

16 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

17 Senator Mondale. All right.

18 Now, was there any discussion about whether it was risky
19 for you to be personally present at the JGS or anywhere else
20 with these Generals at or near the time of the coup?

21 Did you have any discussions about that?

22 Mr. Conein. There were several discussions about my
23 personal security prior to the coup. There were also discussions
24 with me because I was worried about my family in case --

25 Senator Mondale. Well, it was clear that this was very

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1 risky for you, but apart from that, was there any question about
2 whether your presence as an American officer would link us, if
3 known, to the coup?

4 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

5 Senator Mondale. Because I think you mentioned you got
6 out of it fast when you saw newsmen.

7 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, I was scared.

8 Senator Mondale. You didn't want to be seen there.

9 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

10 Senator Mondale. You didn't want to be seen there, because
11 you didn't want our association, whatever it might be, with this
12 group known to the public?

13 Mr. Conein. I did not want --

14 Senator Mondale. Is that correct? That's in here?

15 Mr. Schwarz. Yes.

16 Senator Tower. You were ordered in and ordered out, weren't
17 you?

18 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

19 Senator Mondale. Well, you left yourself?

20 Mr. Conein. I left myself.

21 Senator Mondale. Without any orders.

22 Mr. Conein. At the moment I saw that they were going to
23 bring the Press in, for the capitulation of President Diem, was
24 at the time that they told me to get the hell out, General Don
25 said, get the hell out, we're bringing in the Press.

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1 Senator Mondale. So were there discussions about the
2 wisdom of having you there at all at any time; or did they need
3 a liaison?

4 Mr. Conein. No, sir, it wasn't a question of a discussion
5 in the sense that you're talking about, Senator. You must
6 understand the relationship. I was part and parcel of the whole
7 conspiracy, so if something went wrong, they would go down the
8 drain with me. We were all going down the drain together.

9 Senator Tower. Can we suspend at this point?

10 Let us go vote.

11 (A brief recess was taken.)

12 Senator Tower. Phil, I believe you had the floor when we
13 suspended.

14 Senator Hart of Michigan. I have no questions.

15 Senator Tower. All right.

16 Fritz?

17 Mr. Schwarz. To go back to the telephone conversation about
18 the airplane.

19 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

20 Mr. Schwarz. After you obtained the word that you couldn't
21 get a plane for twenty-four hours, was that word passed on to
22 Mr. Ngo Dien Diem?

23 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

24 This was a telephone conversation, because President Diem
25 had talked to Big Minh and to General Don and it was the first

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1 time during the whole coup that the President had had a chance to
2 talk to Big Minh. Up to that point, he refused at all points to
3 talk to Big Minh.

4 Mr. Schwarz. And in any event, you are quite sure that
5 the word about the plane being available but not being available
6 for twenty-four hours didn't get to Mr. Diem?

7 Mr. Conein. I am positive, because the reason being it was
8 after the conversation with President Diem that both Generals
9 Don and Big Minh came to me and asked me about getting an air-
10 plane to get them out. It was after they had hung up, and this
11 was when I called the Embassy and spoke to Mr. ~~Smith~~ 06

12 Mr. Schwarz. And he gave you then three reasons, or three
13 comments, about the airplane? He gave you those right over the
14 phone, or did he call you back?

15 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, right over the phone and I trans-
16 mitted that message back and I don't recall if Big Minh had
17 walked out but I know that General Don had been told by me
18 exactly that it would take twenty-four hours.

19 Senator Tower. Senator Mondale had the floor when we
20 suspended.

21 Senator Mondale. Just one question.

22 How did you arrive at the figure of money that you had in
23 your possession with your local office there? How was that figure
24 determined, was it just a ballpark amount?

25 Mr. Conein. The amount of money?

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1 Senator Mondale. Yes.

2 Mr. Conain. That was all that would fit in this briefcase.
3 and I wasn't going to haul two briefcases.

4 Senator Mondale. No, what did you -- go to the Director
5 and say, I'd like this much?

6 Mr. Conain. No, sir, I had asked for a certain sum but I
7 could not put it all in this briefcase. This is why I cannot
8 answer you really, if I spent 3 1/2 or 5 1/2.

9 I do know that when I went back to check my safe, one of
10 the packages of 250,000 piasters had fallen over the back end
11 of the little guide rail, you know, that keeps the safe drawers --
12 and one of those packages had fallen back and I remember taking
13 that and I said, look, I've got some left, and I turned it back
14 in and got a receipt for it. So this is why I cannot tell you
15 exactly the amount. They know, and I would say roughly it's in
16 the \$70,000 figure.

17 Senator Mondale. Thank you.

18 Senator Morgan. I have just one question.

19 Senator Tower. I believe Mr. Colby testified this morning
20 it was 5 million piasters.

21 Mr. Conain. Yes, sir, but I didn't spend it all.

22 Senator Tower. Senator Morgan?

23 Senator Morgan. I just have one question, Mr. Conain.

24 Do you have any reason to believe that there was any undue
25 delay on the part of the Embassy in making a plane available?

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1 Mr. Consin. No, sir, the fact being that an aircraft of
2 that size, it would take -- because it would have to come from
3 Guam, sir, then the pilots would have to brief and all the thing
4 on how to go. Now you must understand also that the airport was
5 closed down at that time. No aircraft were coming in or leaving
6 without special permission.

7 Senator Morgan. Would it have come to Tan Son Nhat?

8 Mr. Consin. Yes, sir.

9 Senator Morgan. Now did I understand you to tell Senator
10 Mondale that General Minh never knew that it would take twenty-
11 four hours?

12 Mr. Consin. I don't know whether he knew it or not. I
13 say that I know that I told this to General Don. I can't recall.
14 This was all -- everything is over with, you know?

15 Senator Morgan. But the main thing in my mind, in your
16 opinion there was no undue delay in making the plan available?

17 Mr. Consin. No, sir.

18 Senator Morgan. Well that was the question that was in
19 my mind.

20 Senator Tower. I think we were all a little confounded by
21 that this morning, but I think the explanation of that is that
22 the airplane had to fly directly to the country of assylum and
23 couldn't stop anyplace else. That would require longrange
24 aircraft like the KC-135. You couldn't make it in a C-47.

25 Senator Morgan. Which would not normally be available on

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1 Taiwan?

2 Mr. Conain. No, sir, it was not available outside of
3 Guam or Hawaii at that time, sir. Later on they were available
4 in Subick Bay and Clark Field.

5 Senator Tower. Senator Baker?

6 Senator Baker. Thank you.

7 Who laid on that requirement that it be a nonstop flight
8 to the country of asylum?

9 Mr. Conain. This I do not know, if it was the Ambassador
10 or if this was just an assumption of the people who knew the
11 Ambassador's thinking. This I do not know, sir. I do not know
12 if it came from the White House or the State Department. I do
13 not know.

14 Senator Baker. Do we know from other material?

15 Mr. Kirbow. We assume that McGeorge Bundy might know on
16 Monday.

17 Mr. Schwarz. We don't know.

18 ⁰⁶ Did you have an assumption from the conversation with Mr.
19 ~~Smith~~ that he was prepared for your question? I mean, he came
20 back with an answer that had three rather complicated points.

21 Mr. Conain. Yes, Sir. I assumed that the moment that I
22 would get the go ahead from the junta that they wanted the
23 aircraft that I would levy the requirement and the Embassy and
24 the military were prepared to levy the requirement immediately.

25 Mr. Schwarz. No, but did you assume from your conversation.

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1 with Mr. ~~Smith~~ that he was prepared for your question in light of
2 the complex answer that he came back with?

3 Mr. Conein. Sir, I don't know. I would assume that he had
4 been prepared and obviously if he was prepared that well that
5 somebody must have talked to him. I wasn't there. I was at
6 the other place.

7 Mr. Schwarz. Just to make sure the record is clear on it,
8 but for those rules laid down in the telephone conversation,
9 there were airplanes that the United States had control over
10 which could have been used?

11 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

12 If -- for example, sir, let me point out one thing, that
13 if it had been Philippines Islands that granted asylum first
14 that we would then not have had to use a C-135, we could have
15 used General Harkins' C-130 which was a converted VIP plane.

16 But at that time and under those circumstances there was
17 no way of knowing which country -- assume that it was Japan,
18 we did not want the airplane to land in Taiwan.

19 Mr. Schwarz. But that was a matter of choice?

20 Mr. Conein. A matter of choice.

21 Senator Baker. What do you mean, "we didn't"?

22 Mr. Conein. We -- according to my instructions, were that
23 the airplane was not to make a stop.

24 Senator Baker. What do you mean, "we"? You said

25 you didn't know who laid on that requirement. Was that your

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1 wish?

2 Mr. Conain. I say we don't know. I'm talking now, we
3 the United States government, I'm assuming, because the gentleman
4 has asked me a question and I assume that he had talked to
5 the Ambassador.

6 Senator Baker. Any further questions, any members of the
7 Committee?

8 I reckon that's it.

9 Mr. Conain. Thank you very much, sir.

10 Senator Tower. Thank you, Mr. Conain. We appreciate your
11 testimony.

12 We will ask you back to discuss the matter that Senator
13 Baker brought up.

14 Mr. Conain. At your convenience, sir.

15 (The questions by Senator Baker follows:)

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Senator Tower. Let's go back on the record.

Senator Baker. Mr. Conein, while we're waiting for the other Committee members to return, I have a few questions on other matters and we can arrange the transcript so that it will not interrupt the flow of your other testimony, if that's all right with you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Tower. All right.

Senator Baker. Are you acquainted with a man named A. J. Woolston-Smith?

Mr. Conein. A. J. Woolston? No, sir.

Senator Baker. A private investigator in New York City?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Senator Baker. Do you have any information about the involvement of the CIA, the DEA or its predecessor -- what was the predecessor?

Mr. Conein. BNDD.

Senator Baker. -- in any domestic assassination?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Senator Baker. Do you have any knowledge of any assassinations or any attempted assassinations of persons related to international drug traffic by persons connected or affiliated with the CIA or the DEA?

Mr. Conein. No, sir.

Senator Baker. None at all?

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1 Would you give me that name again?

2 Senator Baker. The name?

3 Senator Morgan. Yes, sir.

4 Senator Baker. Mr. A. J. Woolston-Smith.

5 Senator Morgan. Was that somewhere around Alexandria
6 here?

7 Senator Baker. Well, he's been here, and he's been in
8 New York City, he's been in St. Louis, and I understand at one
9 time he had an office on the West Coast.

10 Senator Morgan. Would you add to that the name Paris
11 Theodore, with regards to any kind of assassination devices?

12 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

13 Mr. Schwarz. Who did show you the assassination devices?

14 Mr. Conein. This was, I think, Senator Weicker asked me
15 specifically in January, I don't recall the date, that he had
16 a report that I had seen assassination devices. I had testified
17 personally to the Senator with an attorney present, and while
18 there I told him that there was another one of my staff members
19 had been present and had seen the same devices and he called
20 for the staff member who verified everything that I had said,
21 and I did not open my mouth during the questioning of this
22 other member of my staff.

23 Mr. Schwarz. Who showed you the assassination devices.

24 Mr. Conein. Sir?

25 Mr. Schwarz. Who showed you the assassination devices?

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1 Senator Tower. Could we suspend this line of questioning
2 for a moment?

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1 Senator Tower. Off the record.

2 (Discussion off the record.)

3 Senator Baker. I will refrain from asking the question,
4 but I wish the next time that we ask Mr. Conein
5 to come back here and bring with him the paraphenalia, the
6 devices, and any brochures that he has.

7 Senator Tower. Do you have any of the devices?

8 Mr. Conein. No, sir.

9 Senator Tower. Do you have the brochure?

10 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir, I have a copy of the brochure that
11 I furnished the Secret Service.

12 Senator Baker. I might ask this one thing, or mention
13 this one thing, rather. You might be prepared to describe to
14 us how you came to have the brochure, particularly with reference
15 to whether you solicited it or were solicited and whether this
16 was the only one that you ever had, and similar material.

17 Mr. Conein. Yes, sir.

18 Senator Tower. Anything further?

19 All right.

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1 Senator Tower. If no one has anything to bring up at
2 this time, the Committee is adjourned until Monday afternoon at
3 2:00 o'clock.

4 (Whereupon, at 5:04 o'clock p.m., the hearing in the
5 above-entitled matter was recessed, to reconvene at 2:00 o'clock
6 p.m., Monday, June 23, 1975).

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**HISTORY OF THE VIETNAMESE GENERALS' COUP
of 1/2 November 1963**

I. BACKGROUND:

1. Without analyzing the various coup plots advanced to CAS prior to the 8 May 1963 Huo incident, it can be stated at the outset that subsequent to this event, the continuing Buddhist crisis presented both a springboard and a coalescent factor variously used by both long-standing and new critics of the Dien Regime for intensified plotting, ranging from a palace coup to direct military action for violent overthrow of the regime. Through early July, the various plots of which we became aware could not be seriously judged with the exception of the 8 July indication that General Tran Van Don, then Commander of the Army, in concert with all but a few of the general officers, had plans for the overthrow of the government to include the removal of the entire Ngo family from power. General Don as well as several other general officers had for a period of a year or more registered dissatisfaction over various policies and inadequacies of the Dien Regime, but at no time did there appear such planning in depth to warrant serious consideration of the probability of action. The 8 July report, however, reinforced by statements from various military sources, including a 5 July report from General Le Van Nghien that a coup would soon occur, warranted close and careful examination of the intent and ability of a combination of the general officers to take action against the regime. Perhaps the most significant, and without a doubt most adverse factor militating against a military coup to occur in the pre-21 August period was the confrontation by Ngo Dinh Nhu on 11 July of the general officers which in retrospect must be seen as an inspired power move to clearly indicate the regime's awareness of coup plotting, to issue a clear warning against action, and most important, to confuse and divide the general officers.

2. The most serious judgment to emerge from this period was the strong speculation that Ngo Dinh Nhu was plotting a power move against President Dien. This was subsequently reinforced by the content of the eulogies prepared for the anniversary of Nhu's acceptance of the grand leadership of the Republican Youth. At that time, however, such a speculation derived only from reported remarks to the general officers and implications of Nhu's intended use of the

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Republican Youth Movement to support his assumption of power by acclamation.

3. The first chapter of the Buddhist crisis culminating in the declaration of martial law on 21 August 1963, provided an overt peg upon which various professional dissidents could hang their vocalization of dissidence, crystallized latent dissatisfaction among newly arisen opposition groups, and convinced many of the professional military that the war against the Viet Cong could not be won if the political situation were allowed to deteriorate.

4. The coup d'etat plotting between 23 and 31 August 1963 in retrospect appears as a somewhat desperate move by the general officers to take action against the Diem Regime. An analysis of this coup plot points up several reasons for its failure to materialize, the most significant of which are as follows:

(a) Contact and knowledge among the American community was too proliferated and must be considered as having adversely affected the security of the operation;

(b) At some point, there occurred a fabricated or actual leak to the GVN which resulted in local press attacks against CAS and foreign adventurers;

(c) At no time did the coup planners control sufficient troop strength to permit rapid and efficient takeover of the palace or other key installations; the forces available to the coup principals were completely outclassed by those forces under the control of the GVN with the certain realization of a blood bath if precipitate action were launched;

(d) At no time did the coup principals indicate an awareness of political strategy required to do more than eliminate the incumbents in the palace. Although there appeared to be some recognition of the desirability of civilian politicians participating in whatever government emerged, even this was ramified when General Luong Van Minh indicated that a military junta was inevitable for at least the initial period after the coup d'etat. There was no indication of a solid alliance between a purely political faction and the military. By the same token, there was not any indication during that period that the dissident elements had any platform of reforms or innovations of policy to present other than a continuation of major

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programs of the GVN.

5. The period between 2 September, the first overt confrontation in the Times of Vietnam banner headline story entitled "CIA Financing Planned Coup D'Etat", and 1 November can be significantly characterized by the following:

(a) The Diem Regime launched a consistent and calculated policy of confrontation with CAS, USIS and various other agencies of the U.S. Government;

(b) The Diem Regime pursued a policy of searching for alternatives to USG aid and a belt-tightening on its own economy;

(c) The Diem Regime at no time during this period demonstrated even the most superficial awareness of the profundity of dissatisfaction and dissidence among the articulate and opinion-forming segments of the urban population;

(d) The USG pursued a policy of graduated pressures in the economic area calculated to force the Diem Regime to effect basic reforms necessary for the successful conduct of the war against the Viet Cong and to win popular support for the GVN headed by Diem;

(e) The exacerbation of the conflict between the USG and the GVN by the continued public inflammatory statements of Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu, both while she was in South Vietnam and during her visit to Belgrade, Rome, Paris and the United States; these statements were well replayed in the vernacular and international press;

(f) The heightening hostile world opinion fanned by the international press;

(g) The inability or failure (the former is most likely) of President Diem and Counsellor Nhu to neutralize or eliminate the dissident general officers.

(h) The deterioration of the economic stability of the nation epitomized by the fluctuating value of the currency, increase in black marketing, rise in prices of some consumer commodities, the marked decrease of imports, and disappearance of gold from the market.

(i) Continued self-immolations by Buddhist bonzes.

6. In summary, the deteriorating political and economic situation during this, the second chapter of the Buddhist

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crisis provided the generals with the situation they required to continue their planning for a coup d'etat, an objective they had never abandoned but had merely curtailed.

XI. CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS/CONTACTS AFTER 2 OCTOBER 1963.

2 October Concin/General Don meeting at NhaTrung with the following significant points: (a) General Duong Van Minh desired a private conversation with Concin; (b) General Ton That Dinh (Commanding General, III Corps) realized he had been duped by Diem Government during his tenure as Military Governor of Saigon between 21 August and 16 September 1963; (c) Generals, during the month of September 1963, submitted a request to President Diem to accord them positions in different ministries which they did not expect Diem to honor; (d) Don stated that the Generals now have a plan; (e) prior to General Dinh's press conference of 29 August, an unidentified Vietnamese civilian told Counsellor Ngo Dinh Nhu that the Americans were contacting various Vietnamese in order to encourage a coup - Don was called by Nhu and shown a list prepared by Nhu naming Americans engaged in coup plotting; Concin's name was not on the list.

3 October Ambassador Lodge approved Concin's meeting with General Duong Van Minh

3 October Concin and General Duong Van Minh met at Le Van Duyet Headquarters: (a) General Minh requested to know USG position with respect to a change in the GVN in the near future; (b) Minh did not expect USG support for himself or his colleagues for a coup d'etat, but did need USG assurances that USG would not attempt to thwart his plans; (c) Minh stated need for continuation of American military and economic aid at the present level; (d) Minh outlined three plans under consideration by the Generals: (1) to assassinate Ngo Dinh Nhu and Ngo Dinh Can, and to keep President Diem in office; (2) have military units go into dissidence against the GVN, encircle and isolate Saigon; (3) direct military action against loyal military units in Saigon; (e) Minh expressed some doubts as to the exact role played by General Tran Khien Khien saying that a possibility existed that General

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them played a double role during the August 1963 coup activities; (f) the Generals had to act quickly because many regimental, battalion and company commanders were working on separate coup plans which, if were abortive would lead to catastrophe; (g) Minn named Generals Tran Van Don, Tran Thien Kien, Tran Van Hien.

10 October Ambassador Lodge instructs C&S not to initiate contact with General Minh or General Lon, but if the Generals initiate contact, such contacts were authorized; in the course of meetings with Lon or Minh, assurances were to be given that the USG will not toward a change of government or deny economic or military assistance to a new regime if it appeared capable of increasing effectiveness of military effort, assuring popular support to win the war, and improving working relations with the United States.

12 October Captain Nguyen Quang Nguyen, Chief of Operations, Armor Command, stated he was contacted by two different coup groups during the week of 5-12 October; the second group was headed by Lt. Colonel Thao Ngon Thac who claimed he talked with Ambassador Lodge and Secretary Helms who had pledged support; when Captain Nguyen was non-committal; Lt. Colonel Thac offered money; Nguyen is still undecided which group he will support.

13 October Mr. Lam Ngoc Huan, Manager of Caravelle Hotel and former ARVN officer who was retired due to suspicions of involvement in November 1960 coup plot, approached an Embassy officer after a social event and stated he was trying to establish contact with a military officer designated by Ambassador Lodge to take part in confidential discussions. Huan claimed he was representing some Vietnamese generals and other officers who wanted to talk to an American military officer about the situation in South Vietnam.

14 October Corbin and Huan held meeting during which Huan confirmed the fact that he was trying to contact and had a message from the general. At a reception to be given 18 October by General Harkins for Ambassador Lodge, one of the generals would approach the Ambassador and ask the latter to vouch for Corbin; if the Ambassador confirms that Corbin is speaking with the Ambassador's permission.

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He should be prepared for a future meeting outside Saigon; Don was only passing a message and did not elaborate further.

18 October: Both Generals Minh and Don present at reception given by General Markins as well as some other ARVN generals; though Ambassador talked with all generals, none mentioned Conain.

23 October: General Don requested Conain to meet him at JCS Headquarters; Don stated the general officers coup committee had decided to attempt to take advantage of the 26 October National Day in order to stage a coup within a week; a member of General Don's staff, Colonel Nguyen Khuong, had leaked to U.S. authorities that a coup was to occur on or about 27 October; Khuong's overtures to the Americans had reached the palace and as a result President Diem had ordered the 5th and 7th Divisions, which were key elements in the Saigon area for the coup, to go on extended operations outside Saigon; Don demanded to know the answers to previous questions with respect to the ESC attitude toward a coup; Conain, under instructions, told Don that the USG would not grant a change of government or deny provision of military assistance to a new regime if it seemed capable of increasing effectiveness of military efforts, assuring popular support to win the war and improving working relations with the USG; Don confirmed that he had attempted to contact Conain through Mr. Huan; Conain asked why the generals had not spoken to Ambassador Lodge at the 13 October reception; Don stated that security would not permit an approach to the Ambassador since other members of the GVN were present; Don promised he would seek permission of the coup committee to give Conain their political plan for the Ambassador's eyes only and requested a meeting in downtown Saigon on 24 October.

24 Oct: General Don's aide requested Conain to be at the VIP Lounge at Saigon airport at 0815 hours; General Don told Conain that he had seen General Markins the evening of 23 October and General Markins informed him that the U.S. military would not thwart any plans of the generals; Don informed Conain that all plans were complete and had been checked and approved. The necessary military units were available and willing to join the coup; the

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would occur within the next week and in no case later than 2 November; Don requested a meeting that evening at a dentist's office in downtown Saigon.

21 October: A report was received at approximately 1230 hours that Lt. Colonel Phan Ngoc Thao was planning a coup scheduled for 1300 hours; the coup failed to materialize. Later, Thao admitted that the coup forces lacked transportation. Otherwise the coup would have begun as reported.

24 October: Concin and Don met at 1930 hours; (a) Don did not receive permission from the coup committee to turn over the political plan; (b) Don had been authorized to outline the political thinking of the coup committee - (1) the succeeding government would be civilian and no member of the coup committee would hold a senior position in the new government; (2) the new government would, as soon as possible, free non-communist political prisoners, hold free elections, and permit operation of opposition political parties except for the Viet Cong; (3) there will be complete freedom of religion and no favoritism or discrimination shown toward any creed; (4) the new government would be pro-West but not a pawn of the USG; (5) the new government would carry the war against the Viet Cong to a successful conclusion with Western, particularly USG, help; (c) Don said that Concin would be in close contact with coup headquarters to insure a close line of communication between the coup headquarters and the Ambassador; (d) Don stated that once the coup started, it would do no good for the USG to attempt to stop it; (e) Don was aware of coup plotting on the part of Lt. Colonel Phan Ngoc Thao; (f) the coup committee was in contact with Thao, but Thao does not have the necessary force to carry out his plan; (g) The generals' coup committee had come to the conclusion that the entire Ngo family had to be eliminated from the political scene in South Vietnam; (h) A new meeting was scheduled for 28 October.

23 October: General Don approached Ambassador Lodge at Da Nang Airport on the occasion of the departure of President Diem and Ambassador Lodge for their return to Saigon and asked if Concin was speaking for the Ambassador; Ambassador Lodge replied in the

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assertive; Don told the Ambassador the USG should not interfere or try to stimulate a coup; The Ambassador agreed, the USG wanted no satellites and the USG could not thwart an attempt.

23 October

Cocain and General Don met at a doctor's office in downtown Saigon at 1545 hours. (a) Don confirmed that he had talked to Ambassador Lodge who had vouched for Cocain; (b) Don stated that the generals' committee wished to avoid Americans' involvement in the coup and requested that other U.S. personnel stop talking to colonels and majors about any coup action; (c) Don was informed that Ambassador Lodge was scheduled to depart Saigon on or about 31 October; (d) Don was interested in the exact time the Ambassador intended to depart on 31 October, stating that he hoped the Ambassador would not change his schedule as a change might be suspected by the GVN; (e) Don stated that he was leaving on 29 October to coordinate final plans with Generals Cao Tri and Nguyen Khanh; (f) Don requested Cocain to remain at home from 30 October onward until further notice; (g) Cocain questioned Don regarding General Ton That Dinh's participation in coup planning. Don stated that Dinh was not participating in the planning and that the coup committee sympathizers had General Dinh continuously surrounded and had instructions to eliminate Dinh if he showed any signs of compromising the coup; (h) Don, although admitting that he was not participating in the actual planning of the units that would participate in the coup, stated that from the meetings of the coup committee he knew of the following units: One-half of the Airborne Brigade, 3 Battalions of Marines, all of the Air Force with the exception of Colonel Huynh Huu Hien, the entire 5th, 7th, and 21st Divisions, half of the 23rd Division, and elements of the 9th Division. (i) The Command Post for the coup would be Joint General Staff Headquarters.

1 November

Cocain was contacted by Captain Hoa, aide de Camp to General Don, at 1315 hours stating that Cocain was wanted immediately at General Staff Headquarters. Since this was not within previous security arrangements for the next morning, Cocain questioned Hoa who said he was only carrying out instructions and stated that Cocain would come in

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uniform to JGS and he then departed. While getting into uniform, the dentist whose office had been used for meetings appeared at Conain's home with confirmation of the message that Conain was to proceed immediately to JGS headquarters. He further stated that the coup was in progress. Conain alerted CAS Saigon via radio net using a pre-arranged voice code and proceeded to the War Room at JGS headquarters. Present were Generals Duong Van Minh, Tran Van Don, Phan Khan Chieu, Tran Thien Khien, Phan Van Minh, Nguyen Ngoc Lo, Mai Huan Khanh, Le Van Kim, Tran Tu Hai, Nguyen Van La, Nguyen Giac Ngo, Tran Ngoc Tan, Le Van Nghiem; Colonels Do Mau, Nguyen Thuong, Duong Ngoc Lam; Majors Le Nguyen Khang, Do Khac Mai, and unidentified junior officers.

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I. November General Dou stated to Conain that Dou had tried to alert Conain at the latter's residence since before noon and no one answered. A later check revealed that Conain's telephone was out of order. Conain was told that he was to keep a telephone line open to Ambassador Lodge; Dou informed Conain that Colonels Le Quang Tung (ARVN Special Forces Commander) Huynh Hui Hien (Airforce Commander) and Colonel Cao Van Vien (Commander of the Airborne Brigade) were arrested; that Colonel Trong Ngoc Lam (Commander of the Civil Guard) and Lt. Colonel Le Nguyen Khanh (Commander of the Marine Brigade) were under guard and not yet declared and considered neutral. Colonel Tung was brought in under armed guard and forced at gunpoint to order a cease-fire between the Special Forces units adjacent to JGS headquarters and two platoons of the 5th Division. Once the cease fire had been declared between Special Forces and JGS, thirty-five armored personnel carriers loaded with troops in combat gear started moving toward Saigon proper.

III. PRE-COUP PLANNING BY COUP PRINCIPALS:

1. It should be first stated that the initial conscious decision and agreement between the coup principals to stage a coup d'etat occurred sometime before 4 July 1963. The first attempt to stage this coup aborted for the reasons stated in Section II above. The actual attempt, however, was never abandoned but was delayed to permit the situation to develop which would allow the generals concerned to take advantage of

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... and calculated maneuvering to turn the balance of force in their favor.

2. General Chuong Van Minh has been the indisputable leader of the coup principals from the outset. General Tran Van Cao has been General Minh's deputy and principal officer in contact with other officers and unit commanders. Major General Le Van Kim, probably the most intelligent of the conspirators, has been responsible for aligning nationalist opposition parties and for developing political planning. General Tran Dinh Khien's role was to issue necessary orders and to act as Chief of Staff to General Minh during the plotting and the actual coup. Other general officers such as Do Cao Tri and Nguyen Khanh were informed of the coup planning but did not actively participate in any of the actual planning. General Ton That Binh, Commanding General of III Corps, was handled completely differently than any other officer. Division Commanders were contacted by General Dou directly or were requested to appear at the Joint General Staff when their military situation permitted or when visiting Saigon. One of the main factors that affected the coup was the decision to eliminate or keep President Diem. The majority of the officers, including General Minh, desired President Diem to have honorable retirement from the political scene in South Vietnam and exile. As to General Nhu and Ngo Dinh Can, there was never dissension. The attitude was that their deaths, along with Madame Nge Dinh Chu, would be welcomed.

3. General Huynh Van Cao, Commanding General of IV Corps, was never taken into the confidence of the coup principals. The participants preferred to work with Colonel Bui Huu Khon, Commander of the 21st Division. With the 7th Division and the 9th Division, the conspirators dealt with regimental commanders and bypassed the division commanders. This tactic applied also to the Marine Brigade and the Airborne Brigade and, to a lesser extent, to the Armor Command.

4. The Saigon Garrison troops, including support troops such as quartermaster, signal, engineers, etc., were contacted through individual commanders. Vietnamese Special Forces, because of its dubious role as the executive arm of the secret police, was never contacted but was always considered by the Generals as being completely loyal to President Diem. On the other hand, elements of the Presidential Guard had been contacted and there were early defections during the fighting. The Ranger Command was not contacted since Ranger Units were assigned to individual corps and divisions. Those assigned to coup units were assumed to be loyal to that unit. The Air Force was

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of the commanding officer, Colonel Huyeh Eou Dien. The medical services, a non-combatant unit, was with the coup plotters. The Navy, always considered faithful to President Dien, was to fail in the emergency of the Vietnamese Special Forces with its commander issuing the necessary orders under duress. Unfortunately, the officer, a Major (first) Thien (phonetic), who had the mission to escort Captain Ho Tao Guyon, Commanding Officer of the Naval Forces, killed the Captain prior to 1200 hours. This nearly upset the timing of the plan. Fortunately, he was driven directly to the Military Hospital and no one knew of his death except the coup principals and the persons loyal to them.

5. Several days before the coup was to take place, General Don coordinated the final plan with Generals Do Cao Tri and Nguyen Thanh and with the Commanding Officer of the Military Academy at Balat. The signal to start the coup was based on a previous decree issued by President Dien which stated that after 1 November there would be no siesta and there would be only a one-hour lunch period. By radio and telephone, the coup principals had issued instructions to coup participants that as of 1 November working hours would begin at 1330. Starting at 0730 hours 1 November the instructions were transmitted to units furthest away from Saigon, i.e., Hue, and in sufficient time so that the forces which were to attack Saigon would be in position at 1330 hours. One unit of the 7th Division received its instructions to move at 1330 hours but actually moved at 1315 hours. This also was one of the minor incidents which nearly upset the coup as there was fear that this would be detected by the forces loyal to Dien.

6. There was a leak to the President prior to the actual coup being launched. Because of this, the President ordered the 41st Ranger Battalion to move into Saigon and to take the PTI and to surround the palace. This caused another stumbling block in the generals' plan. They were completely taken by surprise by this maneuver and had to negotiate with the commander of the battalion to withdraw his unit.

7. The method used by the generals to neutralize opposition elements or doubtful officers was to hold a luncheon meeting for all general officers in the Saigon area (with the exception of General Ton That Dinh) and all commanders of separate units. Once every one of these officers had appeared at General Staff headquarters and were seated (with the

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exception of Captain Nguyen who had been killed), General Minh announced that he and a group of officers were going to overthrow the government by force. At this time a section of Military Police armed with sub-machine guns came into the room. General Minh asked for those officers who were willing to go along with the coup to stand up. He told them they would be free to move around General Staff headquarters but were not to leave the command post. Those who did not join the coup were immediately placed under arrest and put under armed guard. Once the non-coup members had been taken away, General Minh ordered a tape recorder brought to the command post at which time he read the proclamation and objectives of the coup plotters which was recorded. He then asked each officer who had agreed to participate in the coup to speak his name into the tape recorder. Several tapes were made from the original and distributed in different parts of the city in pre-arranged hiding places so that in the event the coup failed, no officer could claim that he had not voluntarily participated in the coup.

8. Once the coup had started, Colonel Khang of the Marine Brigade and Colonel Lam of the Civil Guard decided to join the coup. Colonel Lam at this time recorded instructions on a tape recorder which was to be later broadcast to all Civil Guard units ordering them to cooperate with the Generals' Revolutionary Committee. Lt. Colonel Khang, Commander of the Marine Brigade telephoned his unit commanders not then participating in the coup and ordered them to support the coup. The command of the Air Force was given to Colonel Do Khac Mai vice Colonel Hien. The command of the 7th Division was given to Colonel Nguyen Van Co. Temporary command of the IV Corps was given to Colonel Bui Huu Nhon. Command of troops in Saigon was given to General Ton That Dinh. Under General Dinh's overall command were Saigon support troops, the Marine Brigade, the Albatross Brigade, 40 tanks from the Armor Command, the 5th and 7th Divisions, supported by the Air Force and the Thu Duc Officer's Training Base which joined the coup under the command of Colonel Lam Son.

9. The background to General Dinh's joining the coup forces is particularly important. During the period between 31 August and the lifting of martial law on 16 September, General Dinh actually considered himself the hero of Vietnam and the savior of the Diem Regime. His actions during this period as Military Governor did not endear him to the population or the other officers. Dinh, on approximately 31 August, had the

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... to Diem both President Diem and Generalissimo Nhu that he was a ... and requested a ministerial post for himself. The Binh Minh's reaction was to order him to Falac for a ... period of time, also mentioned that he had been ... by Ngo Dinh Diem. The Generalissimo recognized this fact and General Don started playing on General Binh's vanity by telling him that he was a real hero and that he, above all, should have been thanked by Diem and not for saving the government. Don played up the fact that Diem and Nhu did not appreciate Binh's actions. Don promised Binh that he would personally speak to the President on Binh's behalf and that he would ask that Binh be granted the Ministry of National Defense. Binh believed that Don had his personal interest at heart and Don did, in fact, make such an appeal to the President to enlarge his government but said the proposal in such a way that it would have been impossible for Diem or Nhu to accept. Deadlines were given. Binh was assured that the President would give him a ministerial post. After the deadlines had passed and Binh had not received what he thought was his proper recognition, General Don and other officers, including Colonel Han, Commanding Officer of the Military Academy at Falac, continued to lend sympathy to Binh. Still, Binh was waiting for his ministerial post. Near this did not materialize by early October. The coup principals realized that they had Binh actively thinking against the regime. It is evident from statements during the series of meetings with General Don and General Minh during the month of October that they still did not trust Binh but felt they had compromised him sufficiently to use his troops and, if necessary, to eliminate him if he showed any sign of compromising the generals. Binh was surrounded by officers who surveilled him 24 hours a day including Colonel Co, his deputy, now IV Corps Commander and newly elevated to Brigadier General. General Binh's desire to become a minister was greater than his allegiance to President Diem. He became the actual key to the success of the coup. His fertile and at times brilliant mind was used to the generals' advantage in that General Binh convinced President Diem that he, General Minh, along with Colonel Le Quang Tung, would be given a checkered record to be a counter-coup force. General Binh also convinced Colonel Le Quang Tung to move four (4) of his principal troops companies on a backless operation outside of Saigon so that these troops would not be present on October 30, 1963, General Binh as the Minister of Security in the Provisional Government.

In addition to the above mentioned, Colonel Co Han, (now Brigadier General), Chief of Military Security Service, played his role in spreading false military intelligence reports.

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which went to President Diem. These reports started on or about 24 October and built up a picture of strong Viet Cong forces approaching Saigon for attack and persuaded the Joint General Staff to issue appropriate orders, approved by the President, to move units favorable to the conspiracy to the outskirts of Saigon and also to move units, such as the Special Forces, away from Saigon.

11. Thus, by the maneuvers described above, the generals created the most favorable possible balance of forces in their favor and by attacking during the night hour, ensured the least possible loss of life among the civilian population.

IV. AFTER-ACTION CHRONOLOGY OF BATTLE BETWEEN LOYAL AND REBEL FORCES

1 November

1330 Marines pour into Saigon from the direction of Bien Hoa; intel indicated to be from Quang Trung Training Center.

1345 CAS notified that coup in progress.

- Following have been seized by Marines:
- Telecommunications Center, Ministry of Interior
- Navy Yard
- Directorate General of National Police HQ
- Ministry of National Defense
- Military Security Service HQ (blocked)

Palace surrounded. Presidential Guard barracks at Ten Hout Boulevard entered; subsequently surrendered after heavy fighting.

Fighting in Vietnamese Special Forces area at Ten Son Nhut.

Armored units moving through Saigon.

1350 Colonel Le Quang Tung captured; directed to order Vietnamese Special Forces to cease fire; firing resumed at 1400 h.

Fighting at palace; about 200 troops observed.

35 armored cars moving toward the palace.

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1100 The following are under arrest:

- Colonel Le Quang Tung, VNCF Commander
- Colonel Myunh Son Hien, Air Force Commander
- Colonel Cao Van Vien, Airborne Brigade Commander
- Lt. Colonel Le Nguyen Khong, Marine Brigade Commander
- Colonel Duong Ngoc Lan, Civil Guard Commander

Major Le Quang Trien, Deputy Chief of Staff, VNCF, caught in ambush.

Captain Ho Van Quyen, Commander of the Navy, killed prematurely on the morning of 1 November.

The generals are unable to contact the palace by phone but promise that if Dien will resign immediately, they will guarantee safe departure to Dien and Nhu; otherwise, the palace will be attacked by 1500 hours by the Air Force and Armor.

The following have taken asylum with Italian Ambassador Kborlandi:

- Nguyen Dinh Thuan, Secretary of State at the Presidency
- Nguyen Luong, Minister of Finance
- Phung Khoc Thanh, Minister of National Economy.

Major General Ngo That Dinh was the key; when he agreed, the coup began.

Naval personnel are held aboard PC in Saigon River occupied by naval personnel.

1500 100 truckloads of troops had crossed Bien Hoa bridge by this time.

1515 Palace radioed I and II Corps and the 1st Division that a coup had been attempted in Saigon but that all the insurgents have been arrested.

1520 Heavy fighting, including armor, small arms, and possibly light artillery in the vicinity of the palace.

1525 1000 troops in the palace vicinity.

1530 1000 (500-600) more down Thu Hiep toward the market and the palace area; heavy fire in vicinity of palace.

1535 1000-1500 five French ships off Sai Ra Wharf. No hits.

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1843 Pro-western civilian politicians at JGS with generally will head new civil government. No military personnel in new government which should be established under civil control in two to three days. It is also reported that Vice President Nguyen Ngoc Tho and 1st Vice Premier Phan Huy Quat are the only ones thus far selected for the new government.

Radio VTVN is under coup control; taped broadcast ready but ice relay point had been blown.

The following generals are at JGS:

- M/General Duong Van Manh, Military Advisor to the President
- M/General Tran Van Minh, Permanent Secretary General, KMD.
- R/General Tran Thien Khien, Chief of Staff, Joint General Staff.
- B/General Le Van Kim, KMD
- M/General Nguyen Ngoc Le, Inspector, Self Defense Corps/Civil Guard
- R/General Phan Xuan Chieu.

The following are claimed also to be supporting the coup:

- R/General Nguyen Khanh, Commanding General, II Corps
- W/General Ho Cao Tri, Commander, 1st Division

Bien Hoa and My Tho under coup control.

Joint General Staff preparing heavy air bombardment for the palace

1850 Nha Trang: All quiet. Local commanders are meeting. Armored vehicle has guns trained on tower at the airport.

Following units are supporting the coup:
1st Division, Colonel Bui Bau Nham
5th Division, Colonel Nguyen Van Thien
7th Division, Colonel Bui Thanh Do
9th Division, Colonel Le Quang Trung
3rd Division, Lt. Colonel Nguyen Tho Thuan
6th Division (Dinh has been replaced)

Harboe boats hit; apparently by straggling elements

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- 1640 TVM broadcast proclamation of new government.
 - 1645 General's call palace, talk with Commander Hieu. General mentioned above called with Hieu in relation to the following: B/General Nguyen Van Lu, Capital Military District; B/General Tran Ngoc Tan, Strategic Studies Program; B/General Tran Tu Cat, PsyWar; B/General Nguyen Giac Ego, Assistant to Chief, Joint General Staff for Cuernillos; plus those under arrest at JGS and Central Prison. Hieu is forced at gun point to announce his capture. Air Force Commander Hieu did not speak; may have been eliminated.
 - 1650 Minh told Hieu that if he and Hieu did not resign and turn themselves over to the coup forces within five minutes i.e., by 1650 hours, the palace could be bombed.
 - 1650 Radio Saigon Military Revolutionary Council communique on taking over the government.
 - 1700 Banang quits. Also Hieu, except for a liaison of security guards and police on the road to Tu Dan.
 - 1715 General Hieu again telephoned Hieu but Hieu hung up on him at which point Hieu ordered the palace bombed.
 - 1720 The Voice of the Vietnamese Armed Forces went off the air with no warning.
 - 1745 The generals are interested in the release of Thich Tri Quang. They want him to join the government as Buddhist adviser to symbolize religious freedom.
Two VMSF buses are ready to take food to the troops.
 - 1750 C-47 that had been circling Saigon and dropping leaflets signed by Duong Van Kinh and announcing the overthrow of the government landed at Tan Son Nhut.
 - 1800 B-26 circled Saigon and moved off toward Bien Hoa.
 - 1810 Two B-26s, fully armed, still on ground at Tan Son Nhut.
 - 1815 General Minh is trying to have Colonel and Trung Hung, commander of 31st Division believe he's General Hieu. War was commanding General IV Corps.
- More aircraft vehicles come out of the forest the

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- 1815 Approximately one regiment of troops move out of JCS toward the palace.
Heavy mortar fire in the vicinity of the Zoo; possibly NBS headquarters or Presidential Guard.
- 1930 Heavy artillery, 185mm in Dakao area, Saigon; possibly targetted on NBS headquarters.
Presidential Guard capitulated; coup forces moving on palace (this came from JCS and is somewhat contradictory).
- 1845 Troops are moving on the palace and expect to take possession by 1900 hours, but are prepared for counter move. The generals hope for early recognition by the United States and other western powers. Civilian control to be complete within a week. When the coup is completed, presumably on the night of November 1, Generals will come to the U.S. Embassy and ask Tri Quang to join the new government, but will not force him.
- 1956 Dien refused to capitulate and the palace will be blasted.
- 1900 Ten truckloads of young Vietnamese heading down Nam to toward Cong Ly, excited and proclaiming the revolution. 150 students liberated by coup forces and taken to JCS; holding pro-coup demonstration. Four loud explosions heard in the vicinity of the palace.
- 1915 Minh gives Dien another surrender chance; if he refuses, he will be blasted "off the face of the earth".
- 1925 Minh informed that Ambassador Lodge will receive the generals after the coup is over.
- 1945 Nha Trang: Leaflets proclaiming the new government and signed by General Minh are distributed; army and people seem to be happy; police headquarters and province chief residence are under military control.

Hue and Danang: All quiet with increased security measures in the vicinity of the Ngo Dinh Dia residence.

Curfew declared to be effective 2000 hours.
- 2005 Min; civilian politicians appearing at JCS.

General Minh orders artillery fire halted and air attacks plus tanks to start the assault on the palace.

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2008 Curfew passes are issued to American consuls at the War Language School at JCS. These are signed by General Minh.

2100 Seventeen tanks crossed Bien Hoa bridge and moved toward central Saigon, apparently as part of the coup force
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10500 tanks are landing in palace area from several directions; artillery audible at Embassy.

2130 Troops of approximately battalion strength moving in trucks and on foot along Mac Dinh Chi toward Zoo Hut and palace.

B/General Nguyen Van Cao, Commanding General, IV Corps, may have joined the coup.

Generals schedule a press conference for 0900 hours on 2 November.

2140 General Cao announces his support of the coup.

Lt. Colonel Phan Ngoc Thao, Strategic Signal Inspector for Counsellor Hsu, is brought to JCS by Military Police.

Military Police are rounding up civilian political leaders and bringing them to JCS for conference. Nguyen Ngoc Tho is choice for president if he is still alive. He is not at JCS.

Airborne Brigade Commander, Colonel Vien, is allowed to speak to subordinate commanders via telephone. They announce their support of the coup. This caused Vien to break down and offer to turn in his insignia to General Minh who said Vien would be needed to conclude the fight against the Viet Cong and his loyalty to the Bien Hoa garrison would not be held against him.

Troops moving to the palace area and covering the Zoo to insure that Dien and Hsu do not attempt to escape through a sewer tunnel exit in the Zoo area.

Presidential Guard elements in the palace continue fighting.

One air assault on the Presidential Guard barracks before nightfall. No orders launched as General Minh is still providing the main force resistance to the coup; all other units

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opinion at this point, but Minh prevailed. If the palace is not completely occupied by dawn, additional air strikes will be launched.

2144 Windows in areas near the palace are blown out and small arms fire from all directions in the palace area is aimed toward the palace.

2145 Artillery fire on the Presidential Guard headquarters is lifted; followed by rapid small arms fire from the coup forces.

2200 Approximately 1,000 troops are moving toward the palace.

Danang and Hue: remain quiet. Physical security at Chu's residence in Hue is increased. Several truckloads of troops are seen in Hanoi, streets are empty.

2155 Additional Battalion is deployed from the JGS toward the palace.

B/General Do Cao Tri, Commander, 7 Corps, publicly announces support of the coup.

Indonesian Consul General informs Ambassador Lodge that the Minister of Public Works, Nguyen Van Dich, sought asylum at the home of the Indonesian Consul General.

2210 Approximately 17 tanks and 400 troops are moving out from the palace grounds to engage 1,000 coup force troops.

2250 Demolition specialists and coup tanks are ordered to set charges to blow up the palace.

2310 Two infantry battalions and fifteen M-113's, armored personnel carriers, arrive in Saigon Area by Tho to join the palace attack; under command of Lt. Colonel Pieu.

2400 The following Ministers have resigned to the Joint Casual Staff:

Nguyen Dinh Thuan, Secretary of State at the Presidency and Deputy Minister of National Defense.

Nguyen Luong, Minister of Finance
Tran Le Quang, Agricultural Minister
Bui Khan Thanh, National Secretary

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Colonel Thao heading group designated to blow up the palace. 21 tanks from the Palace Guard which had joined the coup, and some of the armored vehicles from Hy Tho are moving into three columns. They will move in on the palace after the blast. The tanks are commanded by Nguyen Lang, former Chief of Barbed Wire.

The generals are confident of victory except for Le Van Kim, who is dealing with civilian politicians who are haggling over positions in the new government. Kim has decided that the new government will initially be military junta with some civilian participation but with rapid turnover to civilians. Kim is preparing a proclamation for broadcast.

General Hinh is definitely in control and resolves all questions. The generals are trying to contact Minister of Education, Nguyen Quang Trinh, but so far have failed.

Vice President Nguyen Ngoc Tho also has not been located.

Tran Thien Khien is acting as Hinh's Chief of Staff for operations, but Tran Van Son is definitely the No. 2 in the generals' group. General Chieu is assisting General Khien and is following military operations closely, assisted by several competent colonels and majors.

The Italian Ambassador states that Ministers Thuan, Luong, and Thanh have reported to the JCS by telephone in response to a radio appeal from the coup forces. They were not asked their location, but told they might be needed for reporting on the morning of 2 November. Radio subsequently reported that they had checked in along with Minister Quang of Rural Affairs.

3 November

0925 Hue: Consul General reports that troops are deployed throughout the city. Dion's mother's home is guarded by combat and regular police and encircled by barbed wire. Radio Hue is repeating statements by Tri to the people to respect martial law. She is otherwise quiet.

0940 There is to be a provisional government for 3 to 5 months, after which there will be elections for President. The President is an elective official. Candidate to one is named for this post in the provisional government. The primary

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objective of the provisional government will be the successful prosecution of the war against the Viet Comm.

Prime Minister - Nguyen Ngoc Tho (now Vice President)
Deputy Prime Ministers - Pham Huy Quat and Tran Van Lam
Minister for National Defense - B/General Tran Van Lam
Minister of Interior - B/General Ton That Binh
Minister of Information - B/General Tran Tu Gai (now Director of Psychological Warfare)
Minister of Youth and National Education - B/General Tran Van Binh
Minister for Foreign Affairs - Vu Van Mau
Minister for Public Works - Tran La Quang (now Agricultural Reform).

Others not selected.

Nguyen Ngoc Tho has contacted JCS and is safe.

General Binh is negotiating at the palace for the capitulation of the Ranger Battalion and the Presidential Guard.

0310 Vice President Tho at JCS

Palace is under heavy attack

List of officers involved in the coup:

All general officers except Generals T7, Vao Thanh Cao, Luynh Van Cao, and Quang Hung.

Colonels: Lau Van That
Do Mau, Chief of Military Security Service
Nguyen Hau Co
Nguyen Van Chuan, J-4, JCS
Nguyen Khuong, Chief of Staff for Infantry
Tran Vinh Huyen
Bui Hau Nhon, CO, 22nd Infantry Division
Duong Ngoc Lam, Director General Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps

Lt. Colonels: Le Nguyen Khaog, Commander Marine Brigade
Do Khac Lai, Chief of Staff Vietnamese Air Force
Nguyen Cro Ky, CO, 1st Transport Regt Vietnamese Air Force

0310 (1000)...

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Below: Nguyen Binh Luan
General Nam Cong
Vinh Hoi
Nguyen Minh Trung

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1710 Heavy attack on the palace. Minh has ordered that the palace be taken at any cost. 10 armored vehicles are sent from the Embassy roof. Approximately one company of foot soldiers moving up Pasteur toward the palace.

Vice President Tho has accepted position as Prime Minister.

1820 President Dien called General Doa at JCS with surrender offer. He said that he and Nhu want only safe conduct to the airport and departure from there to an unspecified destination. The Nhu children are not at the palace. General Minh accepted President Dien's offer. Minh is attempting to arrange a ceasefire at the palace where heavy fighting is in progress.

The coup forces have entered the palace. Principal fighting consists of tank duels.

Minh's policy toward the Presidential Guard and other units opposing the coup forces is that they will be reinstated in grade if they are willing to continue to fight against the Viet Cong.

1950 Dien called Doa with an offer to surrender unconditionally; he said he had ordered the Presidential Guard to cease firing.

The generals will proceed to the palace to pick up Dien and Nhu and escort them to JCS; they will request preference as to destination and seek approval of the country designated.

Prime Minister Tho has left JCS for his residence and will issue a statement later in the morning.

2000 Sporadic gunfire in various sections of the city. Ammunition exploding in various parts of the palace grounds. Palace still on fire.

Presidential secret in front of palace, but neither Dien nor Nhu has appeared.

There is no real activity in normal throughout the city.

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0110 Casualties on both sides estimated between 50 and 100.

0120 Lt. Gen. Tay, CPTC President, said he was delighted; he said he could drink Koral juice without fear.

0130 Central Region has urgent orders for Civic Action Brigades. Major Van Hieu, National Police Director Nguyen Van Bay, and CID Director Nguyen Van M. all as yet unlocated.

General Mai Hui Kuan is appointed Director General of National Police.

1000 Kuan and Nhu are reported at JCS. This is unconfirmed. There are also rumors that Dien and Nhu have escaped.

Spontaneous small arms fire continues.

Ambassador Lodge cheered enroute to the Chuncry.

The coup is estimated as completed and successful.

1020 Lt. Gen. and Nhu are estimated to be dead. Radio announces that they committed suicide by poison. Bodies are reported to be at JCS.

1130 Lt. Colonel Pham Ngoc Thao said that he and his forces entered Gia Long Palace during the early morning hours to support Dien and Nhu to the JCS after their surrender. A search revealed they were not at the palace and had not been there during the coup. Thao reported back to the JCS. Villas in Saigon and Cholon known to be used by the Ngo family were searched.

1200 General Mai Hui Kuan led the detail which located Dien and Nhu at a villa on Phung Hung street in Cholon. Kuan returned to the JCS with their bodies. Cause of death at this time is unknown.

1330 Lt. Nguyen Ngoc Minh, Special Assistant to M/General Nguyen Khanh, CG 17 Corps, said in Saigon that he had viewed the bodies of Dien and Nhu at JCS. He said it was clear that ~~the~~ they had been assassinated, possibly at Kuan's direction.

Lt. Colonel Thao and Lt. Minh agreed that Dien and Nhu could have maintained telephone communications from the Cholon villas throughout the coup since lines ran from Gia Long

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Palace to Thu Luc and from Thu Duc to the Cholon area.

General Minh and other officers at the SCV reported that Gue and Nhu escaped from Gia Long Palace shortly after 07:00 hours on 2 November by a tunnel known to the generals; they left the tunnel in the dark and went to Bon Thuan Chinese Catholic Church in Cholon where they took refuge. They were discovered at the church at 1630 hours. Bodies are at JCS.

Officer in J-2, JCS, reported that Gue and Nhu and an orderly were caught and killed by their personnel at a church in Cho Qua, Cholon. Captured with them was Captain Do Rui, a nephew of Lo Mau, MSS Chief.

1630 Armored personnel carriers surround Gue's residence in Hue, ostensibly to protect Ngo Dinh Can and his mother.

2000 Crowd gathered at Tu Dam in Hue. Joyful anticipation of celebration on 3 November with the possible destruction of Gue's residence.

V. OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS

A variety of factors permitted the coup principals to execute a successful and relatively bloodless coup d'etat, the most significant of which are as follows:

(a) Knowledge of the coup planning was tightly held by both the Vietnamese and American side. The coup principals sought, as their American contact, an American officer whom most of them had known for many years. Their confidence in the officer was bolstered by accreditation given both by Ambassador Lodge and General Hankins.

(b) The coup was not engineered by any desire for power. It sprang from the grievances and aspirations of the generals. American contact and assurances undoubtedly helped in the promotion of the coup and cohesion of its members. For all practical aspects, the coup was an all-Vietnamese affair.

(c) The firm, unswerving guidance of the commander was an important factor in reassuring the Generals of continued American support.

(d) The generals had a carefully developed program which had been worked out step-by-step over a period of

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(3) The general officers became increasingly convinced that their coup groups, principally composed of professional soldiers and more junior military officers, could attempt to do up what they had done in the past. They were determined to do so and to do so as an abortive effort was made.

In sum, the military execution of the coup and the professional skills shown by the subordinate commanders throughout the entire phase were excellent. Not a single foreigner was killed or injured even though approximately 500 rounds of heavy artillery were expended in downtown Saigon, on the palace, and on the Presidential Guard Barracks. The political aspects of the operations seem to have been less well resolved. Even during the height of battle, the generals were arguing with civilian politicians over the composition of the government. General Ducog Van Minh has emerged as an impressive leader, perhaps alone capable of holding together the disparate elements of the Revolutionary Committee and the civilian following. He is, however, a reticent leader, particularly in the field of politics and has several times expressed his desire to return to military. He possibly did not fully appreciate the complexity of the problems that descended upon him after the coup, and his somewhat simple and even naive political outlook could cause many to typify him as a Vietnamese Napoleon. If he is, the question remains: who will be his Napoleon? The subsidiary question is, what new coup group is forming now.

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