

TOP SECRET

SAIGON 1906 - 23 Oct 63

TO: STATE FROM: LODGE

1. At the time of filing CAS Saigon 1896 I had believed Gen. Harkins was in Bangkok. In fact, he was not, but had been on a trip in the Delta area. In conversation with Gen. Harkins on the afternoon of 23 Oct., we discussed CAS Saigon 1896. Gen. Harkins confirmed that that portion of the message which referred to him was correct. Gen. Harkins added that it was his intention to discourage various military officers from approaching his officers on political matters, as was the case with Col. Khuong, and that he wished to focus the attention of these officers on their military duties in the furtherance of the war effort.

2. I discussed with Gen. Harkins the guidance contained in a message through CAS channels, identified as CAS Washington 74228. I also recalled to his memory our discussions on the previous "Big Minh"/Conein meeting on which we jointly commented in CAS Saigon 1448.

3. Gen. Harkins stated that he had misunderstood and felt that the USG was not now in favor of a coup. I explained that, while it was true that the USG did not desire to initiate a coup, we had instructions from the highest levels not to thwart any change of government which gives promises of increasing the effectiveness of the military effort, insuring popular support to win the war, and improving working relations with the U.S. I noted particularly that Gen. Don had initiated this meeting himself and that no commitments had been made nor would any be made without a full review of the General's plans.

4. Gen. Harkins expressed regret if he had inadvertently upset any delicate arrangements in progress and added that he would find a suitable occasion in which to inform General Don that his remarks of 22 Oct. did not convey official USG thinking.

5. We agreed to keep in close consultation on this matter.

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4  
NLK-94-43

By MMK NARA Date 2/29/96



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2020-11-01