

VI.C Settlement of the Conflict (6 Vols.)
Histories of Contacts (4 Vols.)
3. Moscow-London Track

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UNITED STATES - VIETNAM RELATIONS

1945 - 1967



==== VIETNAM TASK FORCE =====

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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SET #13

VI. C. 3.

VI. SETTLEMENT OF THE CONFLICT

C. Histories of Contacts

3. Sunflower

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SUNFLOWER

This study has three parts: (1) a very brief list of the most important dates in Sunflower; (2) an analytic discussion of the major questions which arose; and (3) a detailed chronology of events and communications. Part 2 is keyed to Part 3, using dates to indicate the source material on which the discussion is based.

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Part I: Principal Dates

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Part I

Principal Dates During Sunflower
(January-April 1967)

- Jan. 5 Embassy Warsaw is told to cease contacts on negotiations with the Poles; Embassy Moscow is told to attempt deliver a message directly to the DRV Embassy, proposing confidential US-DRV exchanges "about the possibilities of achieving a peaceful settlement" in Vietnam.
- Jan. 10 The message is passed in Moscow.
- Jan. 17 The DRV Embassy in Moscow seeks clarification: What is meant by "secure arrangements?" What is the US position on settlement terms?
- Jan. 20 The US replies that its position on settlement would be the appropriate topic for two-way discussions, and suggests possible subject headings for such talks. "Secure" means that no other parties would be informed.
- Jan. 27 The DRV replies with an Aide-Memoire denouncing US aggression and stating that "The unconditional cessation (of US attacks on the North) being materialized, the DRV could then exchange views with US concerning the place or date for contact" as proposed by the US message of January 10.
- Jan. 28 Burchett's interview with Trinh is broadcast by Hanoi, saying that "it is only after the unconditional cessation (of US attacks on the North) . . . that there could be talks."
- Jan. 31 The US replies in writing, objecting to the broadcast of the "essence" of the confidential communication to it, offering to discuss mutual de-escalation or to hold secret talks on settlement terms before finding a formula for stopping the bombing.
- Feb. 6 Kosygin arrives in London for a week's visit. He and the British immediately turn to the prospects for negotiations on Vietnam.
- Feb. 8 President Johnson's letter to Ho, proposing mutual de-escalation, is delivered in Moscow.
- Feb. 7-13 An intense round of UK-USSR talks occurs in London. The British work closely with US representatives on the scene. There are numerous communications between London and Washington, on the one side, and between London and Moscow and London and Hanoi on the Communist side. The US advances various de-escalatory proposals, none of which is accepted.

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- Feb. 13 The bombing of the DRV, which had been suspended for the Tet truce and the balance of Kosygin's visit to London, is resumed immediately after his departure.
- Feb. 15 Ho replies to the President, rejecting his proposal and re-iterating the Trinh formula about talks. The DRV terminates the contacts between Embassies in Moscow.
- Mar. 21 The DRV broadcasts the Johnson-Ho letter exchange.
- Apr. 6 Embassy Moscow delivers another note to the DRV Embassy proposing that contacts be resumed. It is returned the same day, opened but marked "unacceptable."

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Part II: Discussion

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I. How Sunflower Came to Focus on De-Escalation

At Polish insistence, the Marigold exchanges (roughly June-December 1966) tended to focus on possible terms for a final settlement in Vietnam. The US had preferred, and several times proposed, mutual de-escalation as the first issue for consideration, on the grounds that this would produce a favorable atmosphere in which to discuss final settlement terms. The Poles resisted this approach, arguing that the Vietnamese Communists viewed de-escalation as preserving the SVN status quo, which they were fighting precisely to change. It would be easier to bring the DRV to the conference table, they argued, by first addressing the new status quo.

With the collapse of Marigold in December 1966, Sunflower became the primary vehicle for US negotiating efforts, as the US attempted to deal directly with the DRV. Gronouski was instructed to take no further initiative in Warsaw. (Marigold 1/6/67) Guthrie was instructed to seek direct contact with the DRV Embassy in Moscow, proposing the establishment of "completely secure arrangements for exchanging communications" between the two governments in "any capital where we both maintain posts." The proposed subject matter was extremely broad, "the possibilities of achieving a peaceful settlement of the Vietnamese dispute." Discussions could have begun with settlement terms or de-escalation. (1/5/67) This message was passed on January 10. (1/10/67)

The DRV responded first informally by asking "clarification" of the US position on terms of settlement. (1/17/67) On January 20, we replied that the DRV already had considerable information on the US position; further elaboration should now occur through the two-way discussions we were proposing. Illustrative agenda topics were suggested. (1/17/67, 1/20/67)

The DRV then replied formally on January 27 in a stiffly worded Aide-Memoire which (1) denounced the US for "intensifying the war in South Vietnam and escalating the bombing of North Vietnam"; (2) ridiculed US proposals for "conditional suspension of bombing" and "conditional withdrawal of troops" as schemes to prolong US dominance of SVN; (3) insisted that the US "recognize the 4 point stand of the DRV and the 5 point statement of the NLF" if it "really wants peace and seeks a political solution"; and (4) demanded the unconditional end of attacks on the DRV as the condition for the contacts proposed by the US note of January 10. (1/27/67)

The last point contained the obstacle to the further development of Sunflower. The operational passage reads (in Hanoi's "unofficial translation" into English): "The unconditional cessation of bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV being

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materialized, the DRV could then exchange views with the US concerning the place or date for contact between the two parties as the USG proposed in its message handed over on January 10, 1967."

On the following day, January 28, the DRV Foreign Minister, Trinh, made a parallel statement in an "interview" with Burchett. As broadcast by Hanoi in English, he said, "It is only after the unconditional cessation of US bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV that there could be talks between the DRV and the US." (1/28/67)

There are several notable features of the DRV response:

--It gives nothing away with respect to terms for closing out the war. These remain US recognition of the DRV 4 points, etc.

--It identifies a new stage in the negotiating process--"talks" (Trinh) or the "exchange (of) views with the US concerning the place or date for contact" (Aide-Memoire)--which is different from, and hence undoubtedly less than, a fullfledged negotiation.

--It makes "unconditional cessation" of attacks on the DRV a prior condition for even this level of contact.

--The language of the Aide-Memoire, a private communication, holds forth greater promise that contact would indeed follow the cessation of attacks on the North than does Trinh speaking publicly, but even it is not without ambiguity. Washington is given very little notion of what it would get in exchange for a bombing cessation.¹

As compared with Marigold, this surely amounted to a major hardening of the DRV position on the matter of establishing contact with the US. At the same time, by making its position public, Hanoi added to the considerable pressure already felt by the US to push toward negotiations. Although the Trinh interview, the Salisbury visit to NVN, and the diplomatic campaign being waged by the Poles were all designed to increase US embarrassment over the outcome of Marigold, they could also be interpreted as reflecting growing DRV discomfort under the impact of the bombing. It seemed possible, therefore, that Hanoi was more desirous than formerly of getting the bombing stopped and perhaps even of negotiating an acceptable end to the war.

The problem for Washington was demonstrating its responsiveness to any opportunity to negotiate a settlement, without throwing away its blue chip, the bombing campaign. Our solution was to ask again for military reciprocity as well as talks in exchange for a bombing halt.

¹On February 6, Kosygin told Wilson in London that he had just been in direct contact with Hanoi and could confirm that Hanoi would talk if the bombing stopped. (2/6/67).

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In one sense, then, Sunflower may have seemed a step backward from Marigold, in that it focused on conditions for starting talks to the exclusion of further consideration of settlement terms. On the other hand, it turned attention back to de-escalation, the US preferred topic.

It should be noted, however, that the U.S. alone was not responsible for turning the play back to military reciprocity and de-escalation. Hanoi's January 27 message and January 28 Trinh statement were as much, if not more, the cause of the shift. The U.S. message of January 10 was so general as to allow Hanoi to respond either with settlement terms or de-escalatory proposals. The fact that Hanoi chose the latter, probably recognizing that neither side was prepared to make further military concessions at this point, may indicate that North Vietnam was not anxious for or desirous of talks or negotiations except on its own terms in the first part of 1967.

The U.S. seemed to understand the Sunflower contacts in just this light. Referring to the Trinh statement and Sunflower, one of the U.S. principals wrote:

"Yet it may not be enough to say that Hanoi has simply been engaged in this public campaign. In order to make its own position effective, Hanoi has had to weaken and almost to eliminate its previous stress on the four points and recognition of the NLF. Its propaganda suggests that it has been somewhat pressed to explain this shift to its own people and the NLF. In short, Hanoi took some risks and perhaps, in the eyes of its people, made a significant change in its position.

"Against this background, Hanoi's rejection of our proposal, on February 14, was hardly surprising. As we knew at the time, the proposal was extremely unfavorable to them -- although also the only one we could have made in this area. Moreover, Hanoi had only five days to weigh this concrete proposal, and had to do so under what may well have been the worst possible circumstances from their standpoint -- with the high probability of our resumption hanging over them. In other words, the firm and sharp rejection was almost what we had to expect at this stage. It was not a clear indicator that Hanoi is dug in."

In short, neither side expected to enter talks at this time.

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II. "Unconditional" and "Permanent"

There is, and perhaps will always remain, some confusion as to whether Hanoi's condition for talks during Sunflower was an "unconditional" or a "permanent and unconditional" cessation of the attacks on NVN.¹ In trying to sort out this question, it is useful to distinguish four kinds of DRV demands:

(1) Demands with nothing offered in exchange. These reflect ultimate DRV objectives, no doubt, but they are non-operational, in that there is no consequence for non-compliance, no reward for compliance. As they are essentially statements of principle, they are the toughest of all.

(2) Demands posed as conditions for "establishing peace." Here, peace is the quid pro quo. It would be a large reward if earned, but it is a long way off because so many steps must be taken first. These rank second in toughness, therefore.

(3) Demands posed to provide a "basis for negotiations."

(4) Demands posed as conditions for "talks." From the Trinh interview on, these became the operational elements in the exchanges.

Sometimes more than one kind of demand is posed in the same document or statement, with the result that varying degrees of toughness are reflected in different connections.

--The DRV Aide-Memoire demanded US recognition of the DRV 4 points, etc., "if the US really wants peace" (1/27/67, para C); but it demanded the "unconditional cessation" (not "permanent and unconditional") of attacks on the DRV in exchange for talks. (1/27/67, para D.)

--The Trinh interview demanded at one point that US attacks "stop definitively and unconditionally," offering nothing in exchange (1/30/67, response to question 2); but it said at another that "only after the unconditional cessation of the bombing . . . could there be talks." (1/30/67, response to question 3) (Emphasis supplied)

--Ho Chi Minh's February 15 letter to the President contains parallel formulations: for the "restoration of peace" attacks "must stop definitively and unconditionally," the US must recognize the NLF, etc; but it is "only after unconditional cessation . . . that the DRV and the US could enter into talks." (1/15/67, para F.)

In Ho's February 13 letter to the Pope, he says the US must "end unconditionally and definitively the bombing . . . , withdraw from SVN

¹In some texts, especially DRV translations into English, the term "definitive" is used instead of "permanent." The meaning is almost certainly the same, both terms being English equivalents of the French "definitive."

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. . . , recognize the NLFSV Only in such conditions can real peace be restored in Vietnam." (2/13/67) Comparing this with Trinh's statement, Mai Van Bo explained to the New York Times that Ho's "message referred to the terms of a settlement and not to the process of getting peace talks started. Therefore it did not constitute a change over the Vietnamese position." (2/23/67) Bo went on to make clear that he and the Times correspondent were having a "conversation," not an "interview." For an "interview," he would have insisted on written questions and would have given written answers. The point here is the emphasis laid on textual precision. Bo complained that neither President Johnson nor Secretary Rusk had ever quoted Trinh's statement fully or accurately, proof, he said, of bad faith since Hanoi's real position was fully known and understood in Washington.

Bo may well have been wrong about Washington's understanding. Unfortunately, he did not spell out the distortions he thought had occurred. Unfortunately, too, his "conversation" added to the ambiguity, since he is described (but not quoted) as arguing that "any cessation of bombing that was not clearly labeled 'permanent and unconditional' would leave the 'threat of bombing' in tact and thus would constitute an unacceptable interference with the negotiation." Since he had not answered in writing, it is not clear if he intentionally introduced a new formulation or if the Times synthesized his views in a way he would not have done.

None of the official DRV texts examined for this study (letters from Ho, "interviews" with DRV officials, Hanoi broadcasts, Aides-Memoire, etc.) demand a "permanent" halt to the attacks as a condition for talks. These materials cover the period January-April 1967. It seems most likely, therefore, that this was not a condition during the period in which Sunflower was active.

Inexplicably, the U.S. did not seem alive to the distinctions being made by Hanoi. We persisted in reading the terms as demanding both "unconditional and permanent." We also showed no awareness of the difference between "talks," "negotiations," and "settlement" or "peace." Whether having been alert to these distinctions would have altered our behavior is problematical.

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III. Reciprocity

Whether or not the DRV was demanding a "permanent" halt in the bombing, it is entirely clear that their demand from January 27 on was for an "unconditional" one. Hanoi was explicitly refusing the military reciprocity the US had repeatedly asked for if the bombing were to stop. At the very outset of Sunflower, then, the issue was firmly joined between the two sides on this matter.

DRV intransigence may have received some encouragement from our unilateral suspension of bombing within 10 miles of Hanoi's center on December 24, 1966. From the Communist vantage point, this may have appeared as a response to pressures on the US generated by the collapse of Marigold, the Salisbury reportage, messages from U Thant and the Pope, etc. If we would give this much to keep the prospects of US-DRV contacts alive, perhaps we could be made to give much more.

On the other hand, we had indicated at the outset that our action was taken unilaterally, but in the hope of seeing a reciprocal gesture from the other side. Harriman made clear to Dobrynin on January 17 that we did not feel bound to maintain the sanctuary indefinitely in the absence of some response from Hanoi.

The response, when it came, had a little carrot, "there could be talks," and a lot of stick, "there would be no reciprocity." Our response was to probe for concealed reciprocity. Perhaps the other side would give something in exchange, if not forced to do so openly.

One point should be made clear -- the DRV has never stated that it would not reciprocate militarily at some future point. Hanoi was stating simply that it would not reciprocate prior to or in exchange for a U.S. bombing cessation. Its objective seems to have been (and still is) to remove the bombings as a "blue chip."

From our vantage point, we were working two different strategies. The first strategy was that we would not stop the bombing in exchange for talks alone; there had to be reciprocity, preferably a DRV infiltration stoppage. The second strategy was to circumvent the reciprocity issue entirely and to concentrate on getting "discussions" started without any de-escalatory act by either side. This was embodied in the statement that the U.S. was prepared for "unconditional discussions" at any time.

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IV. Specific US Proposals for De-Escalation

When Sunflower went active, early in January, the US already had several de-escalatory proposals outstanding. During Sunflower, several more were made.

Earlier Proposals

(1) Goldberg's UN Speech. (September 22, 1966) The US offered "to order a cessation of all bombing of NVN--the moment we are assured, privately or otherwise, that this step will be answered promptly by a corresponding and appropriate de-escalation on the other side." (Marigold, 9/22/66) This proposal invited the DRV to suggest its own matching action--which would have to be accepted by, or renegotiated with, the US. Upon agreement, the US step would be taken first.

The offer was repeated in more general terms on December 31, when Goldberg wrote U Thant, "we are ready to order a prior end to all bombing of North Vietnam the moment there is an assurance, private or otherwise, that there would be a reciprocal response toward peace from North Vietnam." Goldberg specified that he was reaffirming his September offer and indicated that the NVN response should be "tangible." However, this time he did not use the terms "promptly" and "corresponding and appropriate de-escalation." (12/31/66) Carefully read, the proposal was unchanged, but an impression of greater liberality on the US side may have been given.

(2) Phase A-Phase B. This was an elaboration of the Goldberg proposal sent on a highly confidential basis to the DRV in November 1966, via the Poles and quite independently via the British (Wilson and Brown) by way of the Russians. It was intended as a face-saving package, "which in its totality represented what both we and Hanoi would agree to as a reasonable measure of mutual de-escalation, but which would have two separate phases in its execution. Phase A would be a bombing suspension, while Phase B, which would follow after some adequate period, would see the execution of all the other agreed de-escalatory actions. Hanoi's actions taken in Phase B would appear to be in response to our actions in Phase B rather than to the bombing suspension." (Marigold 11/13/66, 11/16/66) The steps to be taken by both sides in Phase B were again left open for discussion with the DRV.

(3) The Hanoi Sanctuary: On December 24, 1966, we informed the DRV via the Poles that US air strikes within 10 nautical miles of the center of Hanoi would be stopped and that the US would be impressed by some reciprocal de-escalatory step on the Communist side. (Marigold 12/24/66) We suggested the cessation of VC terrorist activity within 10 miles of Saigon's center as such a step and set up a watch in Saigon to see if the other side responded. No positive response, verbal or de-escalatory was forthcoming.

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Subsequent Proposals

As Sunflower unfolded, the earlier proposals were re-iterated and some new ones advanced:

(4) Expanding on the Hanoi Sanctuary. On January 31, the US through secret channels drew DRV attention to the bombing sanctuary around Hanoi and offered "to implement additional measures to de-escalate the bombing of the North to create conditions conducive to the success of talks with the DRV. We, of course, would be impressed with similar acts of restraint on the part of the DRV," which, if forthcoming, need not be publicized. (1/31/67) This leaves it to the DRV to suggest reciprocal acts and suggests that the US would be willing to act first. (In this note, we also urged the DRV again to consider the Phase A-Phase B formula.)

(5) President Johnson's February 3 Press Conference. In response to a question asking "what kind of other steps the other side should take for this suspension of bombing," the President responded, "Just almost any step. . . . We would be glad to explore any reciprocal action that they or any of their spokesmen would care to suggest." The language is forthcoming in tone, but makes no commitment to do more than "explore" suggestions of the other side. (Marigold 2/3/67)

(6) Baggs-Ashmore. On February 5, Harry Ashmore wrote Ho Chi Minh, conveying a message he had drafted with State's cooperation. He described US officials as interested "in your suggestion to us that private talks could begin provided the US stopped bombing your country and ceased introducing additional US troops into Vietnam. They expressed the opinion that some reciprocal restraint to indicate that neither side intended to use the occasion of the talks for military advantage would provide tangible evidence of the good faith of all parties in the prospects for a negotiated settlement." The letter then asked Ho to respond to this point. (2/5/67) Thus it offered no US action until Hanoi's reciprocation was indicated, nor did it specify US willingness to stop the bombing first. The reciprocal act was to be a "tangible evidence of good faith," but one sufficient in magnitude to indicate that neither side intended to gain a military advantage.

(7) President Johnson's Letter to Wilson. On February 6 or 7, the President wrote confidentially to Wilson that we planned "to inform Hanoi that if they will agree to an assured stoppage of infiltration into SVN, we will stop the bombing of NVN and stop further augmentation of US forces in SVN." This was based on the understanding that a bombing suspension was unacceptable to Hanoi and the US had to "accept an unconditional and permanent cessation of bombing." It is not really explicit about which side is to act first, though it may have read to Wilson, who had previously passed

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the Phase A-Phase B proposal, as if we would stop bombing when the other side "agreed" to stop infiltration.

(8) President Johnson's Letter to Ho. On February 8, the President sent a confidential letter to Ho in which he offered to stop bombing the DRV and stop augmenting US forces in SVN "as soon as I am assured that infiltration into SVN by land and by sea has stopped." This, for the first time, spelled out a measure of reciprocity the US would consider acceptable. As with the letter to Wilson, this proposal was based on the understanding that Hanoi required a permanent and unconditional end to attacks before talks. As compared with earlier US proposals, it clearly reversed the order of events: infiltration would stop first, then the US would stop bombing and augmenting force levels. Embassy Moscow was instructed to deliver this message on February 7, but was unable to do so until the 8th. The date of its drafting is not available in the materials used for this study.

(9) Revised 14 Points. On February 9, Secretary Rusk drew attention to a newly annotated statement of the US 14 Points For Peace, of which the fourteenth included the following: "We are prepared to order a cessation of all bombing of NVN, the moment we are assured--privately or otherwise--that this step will be answered promptly by a corresponding and appropriate de-escalation of the other side. (2/9/67) Here, again, the US offers to act first and the nature of the reciprocal action is left open.

(10) Goldberg's Howard University Speech. On February 10, Goldberg stated, "The United States remains prepared to take the first step and order a cessation of all bombing of NVN the moment we are assured, privately or otherwise, that this step will be answered promptly by a tangible response toward peace from NVN." (2/10/67)

(11) US Version of British Proposal. Late on February 10, the British passed Kosygin a draft proposal, cleared by Washington. It indicated that the US would order a cessation of bombing as soon as it was assured that infiltration had stopped; within a few days, the US would stop further augmenting its force in SVN. The deal was to be communicated confidentially to Hanoi, and DRV acceptance could be kept secret as well. (2/12/67)

(12) Extension of Tet Truce. Late on February 12, the President wired Wilson, authorizing him to approach Kosygin with this proposal: "If you can get a North Vietnamese assurance--communicated either direct to the US or through you--before 10:00 a.m. British time tomorrow that all movement of troops and supplies into SVN will stop at that time, I will get an assurance from the US that they will not resume bombing NVN from that time. Of course the US build-up would also then stop within a matter of days." (2/12/67)

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As the US had already stopped bombing for Tet, the sequence would in effect be: US bombing halt; DRV infiltration halt; US build-up halt. At British request, the time limit was later extended by six hours, to 4 p.m. British time. Even with this, the time allowed for a DRV response was short, and the problem of actually stopping the movement of men and supplies in that period would have been substantial.

US De-Escalatory Proposals

<u>Proposal</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Parties</u>	<u>Channel</u>		<u>Sequence of Steps</u>	
				<u>Public or Confidential</u>	<u>First</u>	<u>Second</u>
1. Goldberg's UN Speech	9/22/66		Public	Pronouncement	US stops bombing	Corresponding, appropriate de-escalation of other side
2. Phase A- Phase B	mid-Nov.66	Poles		Confidential	US stops bombing	Both sides de-escalate further after adequate period
3. Hanoi Sanctuary	12/24/66	Poles		Confidential	US had already stopped bombing near Hanoi	Some reciprocal step hoped for
4. Expanding on Hanoi Sanctuary	1/31/67	US-DRV		Confidential	US extends bombing sanctuary	Similar act of restraint from other side
5. President's Press Conference	2/3/67		Public	Pronouncement	Sequence not specified	
6. Baggs-Ashmore	2/5/67	Ashmore		Confidential	Sequence not specified	
7. President's Letter to Wilson	2/7/67	UK		Confidential	Sequence not specified	
8. President's Letter to Ho	2/8/67	US-DRV		Confidential	DRV infiltration stops	US bombing & troop buildup stop
9. Revised 14 points	2/9/67		Public	Pronouncement	US stops bombing	Corresponding, appropriate de-escalation of other side
10. Goldberg's Howard Speech	2/10/67		Public	Pronouncement	US stops bombing	Tangible response toward peace
11. US Version of British Proposal	2/10/67	UK-USSR		Confidential	DRV infiltration stops	US bombing & troop buildup stop
12. Tet Truce Extension	2/12/67	UK-USSR		Confidential	US bombing was already stopped	DRV infiltration to stop, followed by stop in US troop build-up

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V. DRV Responses, Verbal and Military

There are indications of varying firmness that all of these proposals were in fact conveyed to Hanoi, though it is not clear how quickly they all arrived. The DRV Embassy in Moscow confirmed prompt transmission of all the communications passed to it, including the President's letter of February 8. On the other hand, Ho claimed to have received the letter only on February 10. Kosygin indicated that he was in quick communication with DRV authorities (a matter of hours for a message and reply) during his London visit (see e.g., 2/6/67).¹ As the deadline for ending the Tet truce approached on February 13, "President's Cipher" telegrams were sent from the Soviet delegation in London to Moscow, Kosygin spoke with Brezhnev about the proposals by telephone, and the DRV Embassy in Moscow transmitted, then received, cipher messages from Hanoi. (2/13/67)

In its Aide-Memoire to the US on January 27 and the Trinh interview of January 28, the DRV firmly rejected reciprocity in the matter of de-escalation. No further direct communication with the US was made by Hanoi until Ho's letter to President Johnson of February 15, which repeated the Trinh formula in rejecting reciprocity. In accompanying oral remarks, the DRV Charge also said he could no longer meet with US representatives in Moscow.

At 3:32 p.m. British time, February 13, just 28 minutes before the expiration of the deadline on the US proposal for using the Tet truce to begin de-escalation, Hanoi broadcast a letter from Ho to the Pope. Ho was sharp in tone, denouncing US aggression and demanding an unconditional and definitive cessation of all attacks on the DRV, US withdrawal from SVN and recognition of the NLF as the conditions for "peace." He did not refer to conditions for "talks." (2/13/67) Carefully read, therefore, the letter did not address the question of mutual de-escalation, as a first step toward negotiations. However, its timing and tone gave the impression of a rebuff to US proposals.

Earlier, the DRV had positioned two divisions within or just north of the DMZ. During the last week of January and the first week of February, an additional division was believed to have moved south. With the Tet truce, the movement of supplies southward between the 19th and 17th parallels in the DRV increased sharply, to a rate about double that of the Christmas truce and several times that of non-truce periods. Thus throughout the first weeks of Sunflower, the Communists seemed increasingly to be positioning themselves to undertake combat operations at a substantially increased level. (2/9/67)

¹According to a forthcoming CIA study, only 2 of the 14 DRV Politburo members were known to be in Hanoi in early February. Two had gone to Peking. Possibly some were also in Moscow, to tighten liaison with the Russians during Kosygin's London visit.

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US sensitivity to this deployment increased as the talks in London proceeded and the possibility that the other side might actually accept a proposal for a bombing halt grew more vivid. This threat was emphasized by US officials, in explaining our sudden reluctance to agree firmly to a permanent bombing cessation which would be followed only after some interval by a halt to infiltration. The DRV divisions might be committed during such an interval, without technically violating the agreement.

It is not at all clear what the other side hoped to accomplish by this tactic. The deployments were occurring throughout January and early February, and the other side was aware, through our public statements, that we knew of them. They certainly worked against any possibility that we would finally accede to a truly unconditional cessation of attacks on the North. It even made more difficult the much lesser task of inducing us to stop bombing first on the assurance of a subsequent--probably ill-defined--reciprocal restraint from the other side. It was well designed, on the other hand, to produce the result which actually followed: no agreement on de-escalation, but a sharp upsurge in the fighting instead.

On this reading, Hanoi preferred the sword to the conference table, except if it could get talks on its own terms. Insofar as Hanoi believed that its terms were not buyable by the U.S., the Trinh interview et al seems to signal less an attempt to get the bombing stopped and/or to talk than to find a more effective political posture from which to continue prosecuting the war. To put it another way, the Trinh interview may mark DRV discouragement about winning its objectives via negotiations and an increased reliance on fighting and propaganda. Hanoi may well have been moved toward this posture by the following factors in combination: (1) The relatively tough stance revealed by the US during Marigold, toward both settlement terms and the circumstances under which we were willing to start talks; (2) The sensitivity to criticism, leveled either against our desire for negotiations or the bombing campaign against the North, revealed by the US after the Marigold contact aborted and Salisbury visited the DRV; and (3) The repeated urging of the DRV's European supporters to adopt a more forthcoming attitude toward negotiations.

An alternative interpretation has been advanced, however, by the Soviets. On February 17, Zinchuk told Bundy that Hanoi had noted repeated statements by us that we had undertaken the bombing in order to get Hanoi to talk. Hence, Hanoi had supposed that its Burchett interview position of willingness to talk if we stopped the bombing was a direct (and presumably acceptable) response to our own position. This explanation does not take explicit account of the DRV build-up around the DMZ nor conjecture as to the use that would have been made of these forces in the event of an unconditional halt in our bombing and US-DRV talks.

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VI. The British Role

The eagerness of the British leaders to participate with maximum personal visibility in bringing peace to Vietnam--in early February alone Wilson proposed travelling personally both to Washington and Hanoi--was sometimes embarrassing to the US, which greatly preferred confidential dealings with a minimum of participants. (2/11/67, 2/12/67, 2/13/67) At the time of Sunflower, we had direct contact with the DRV in Moscow and needed no intermediary to make our views known in Hanoi. On the other hand, the domestic political value to Wilson and Brown of such a role and the importance of their support for US policies not only in Vietnam, but elsewhere too, made the US willing to bring the British into negotiation efforts. Furthermore; Kosygin's visit to London in early February made British participation inevitable. Kosygin and Wilson would discuss Vietnam and issue statements on it with or without a US input. If we stood aloof from it, the results could be harmful to the US. And the possibility that Kosygin could use Soviet influence in Hanoi introduced an element of potential value, not available in direct US-DRV exchanges.

Looking back on it, there seems little doubt that bringing the British in was to US advantage. But there were adverse consequences along the way:

--Wilson made references, in Parliament and to the press, not well veiled at all, to the transactions of Marigold and Sunflower. (2/8/67, 2/14/67) While these were not critical of the US, they gave those not previously informed reason to believe that something of substance had been afoot on the negotiations front. This was alarming to the GVN and Troop Contributing Nations. It gave a peg on which to hang other tendentious accounts of what "really" happened in these episodes. And it seemed to contradict the President, who on February 3 had said he had seen no action by the other side that he could interpret as "a serious effort to either go to a conference table or to bring the war to an end." (Marigold 2/3/67)

--The battle of the tenses brought additional friction to the US-UK relationship, including emotional personal communications between Wilson and the President, Brown and the US Ambassador, etc., in which the British leaders claimed to have been put in "a hell of a situation" and questioned US intentions and consistency of policy in the search for a negotiated settlement. This subject seems of sufficient importance to be treated separately. (See the next section.)

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VII. The Battle of the Tenses

By the end of January 1967, the US had outstanding at least four de-escalatory proposals to the DRV, calling for the US to stop bombing as the first step. (See Section IV) The most detailed of these, the Phase A-Phase B proposal, actually emphasized this aspect as a face-saving device for the DRV, which would not then be forced openly to acknowledge reciprocity. This proposal had been passed via the British in mid-November 1966, and they were thoroughly familiar with it. When the President wrote to Ho, however, on February 8, he offered to stop bombing only "as soon as I am assured that infiltration into SVN by land and by sea has stopped." (Emphasis supplied.) The DRV had been assured that our contact with them would be kept entirely confidential, and no copy of the letter to Ho was given the British, nor, apparently, to the US representatives in London.

In the President's letter to Wilson (February 6 or 7) the question of which side would act first was not made explicit. Its language, therefore, was equally consistent with the Phase A-Phase B proposal or with the letter to Ho.

As soon as Kosygin arrived in London (February 6), he launched into discussions of Vietnam and China. Wilson responded by spelling out the Phase A-Phase B formula in detail. (2/6/67) When Kosygin failed to show interest, Wilson repeated the proposal on February 7 in even greater detail, giving it to Kosygin in writing and coming down repeatedly on the willingness of the US to act first. (2/7/67)

--"They (the US) recognize the need for a first and visible step. They further recognize that this step must mean the cessation of the bombing. This I believe they will do"

--"Because the USG know that the second stages will follow, they will therefore be able first to stop the bombing,"

So much for Phase A. Wilson structured the remainder of the President's proposal into a concrete version of Phase B.

--"The US are willing to stop the build-up of their forces in the South if they are assured that the movement of North Vietnamese forces from the North to the South will stop at the same time. Essentially therefore the two stages are kept apart."

--"But because the USG know that the second stages will follow, they will therefore be able first to stop the bombing"

The British felt encouraged by Kosygin's apparent interest and surmised that he had not understood the proposal when put to him by

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Brown the previous November. They gave us a copy of the text passed to Kosygin, and it was cabled that night to Washington.

Thus precisely as the President's letter to Ho was authorized for delivery in Moscow, the British were proposing a different sequence of the same actions to Kosygin in London. Their idea was to incorporate the proposition into a joint statement by the UK and USSR, as co-chairmen of the 1954 Geneva Conference. A draft of such a statement was submitted to Washington, which approved it with some revision, then passed to the Russians. In the draft, however, the sequence of actions again became ambiguous, as so often happens with the use of the English future tense. (The co-chairmen were to ask assurances from the US that the bombing "will stop"; from NVN that the infiltration will stop"; and again from the US that the troop build-up "will stop.") (2/9/67)

If the Russians demurred on the joint statement, the British intended to push again on the Phase A-Phase B formula. As Kosygin wanted to submit the latter to the DRV, the British gave it to him once again in writing on the evening of February 10. At last, however, their attention was drawn to the difference between their sequence and the one envisioned by the US in the President's letter to Ho. Late on the night of February 10, therefore, a revised version was handed Kosygin, with the comment that it had been authorized by the White House. The difference between the two versions boiled down essentially to a change in tenses. The British version said, "The US will stop bombing NVN as soon as they are assured that infiltration from NVN to SVN will stop." The revised version changed the last two words to "has stopped." (Emphasis supplied.) (2/12/67 repeats the relevant texts.)

Wilson and Brown apparently took strong exception to the last minute change of tenses, arguing that it undercut their credibility as negotiators vis-a-vis the Russians and that they had based their formulation on familiar US positions (the revised 14 points, etc.), clearing their drafts with the US as they went along. (2/11/67)

We replied along several lines: (1) The proposal now under discussion was different than that in the 14 points because it offered additional US concessions: We would stop our troop build-up as well as the bombing, in return for the DRV concession. (2) The Russians were aware of the letter to Ho, hence they would have known the sequence required by the US. The change in tense in the final draft, therefore, would not surprise them or impair British credibility. (3) The NVA build-up around the DMZ posed a new military situation, in which we simply could not risk a major assault from the North in the interval between Phases A and B. (4) Finally, the DRV had had the Phase A-Phase B formula for several months without showing a "flicker of interest." It was unlikely, therefore, that the matter of sequence was critical. "Everyone seems

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to wish to negotiate except Hanoi." (2/11/67, 2/12/67)

These answers apparently did not entirely assuage British feelings. In March, they raised the question again in a letter from Wilson to the President (3/16/67) and in conversation between Brown and Kaiser (3/21/67). They clearly hoped to continue a significant role as peacemakers and asked for reassurance on their understanding of current US positions, on avoiding similar "mis-understandings" in the future, and on the continuing US desire for negotiations.

Shortly after Kosygin's London visit, Bundy asked Zinchuk in Washington whether the problem of tenses had thrown the Soviets off; Zinchuk said that it had not significantly disturbed them. (2/17/67) However, in Moscow, about the same time, Kosygin's interpreter twitted Thompson about the episode, saying, "that was quite a switch you pulled on us in the text of your proposal." (2/17/67)

It can be argued, however, that the change in tenses was more serious. It could have been used as ammunition within the party presidium in Hanoi by those who believe the U.S. would not show "good faith" toward any agreements reached. It could still be used as part of a public propaganda exercise.

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VIII. The Soviet Role

The British were first startled, then delighted, to find Kosygin eager to play an active role as intermediary between the US and Hanoi. Kosygin's interest was conveyed to us, of course, by the British, and we had no independent reading on his attitude. To some extent, their appraisal of his mood may have reflected their own great enthusiasm for the part. But even allowing for this, there was definitely a sharp change from previous Soviet reluctance to play the middleman, especially when subject to public exposure.¹ As already noted, Kosygin was several times in prompt, confidential communication with the DRV authorities during his stay in London. And he made a public statement expressing belief that the UK and USSR could make a "contribution to the settlement of the Vietnam issue on the basis of the Geneva agreement," by virtue of their roles as Geneva co-chairmen. (2/8/67)

What produced this change in Soviet attitudes? Were they acting on DRV behest? Or were they now willing to put pressure on Hanoi in pursuit of interests of their own?

Only a little light is shed on these questions by the materials relating to Kosygin's stay in London. He was apparently willing to transmit proposals for DRV consideration more or less uncritically. While he argued the general merits of the DRV's side of the war, he did not try to bargain or alter specifics of the proposals transmitted to him.

State noted with surprise, for example, that he agreed to forward the proposal for extending the Tet bombing pause without objecting to the "ultimatum" implied in it, as the Soviets had so often done in the past. (2/19/67) What is more striking is that he did not react adversely to the substance of the principal de-escalatory proposal under discussion--the termination of all DRV infiltration and supply into SVN in exchange for a US halt in attacks on the North and in troop level augmentation. Entirely apart from the sequence in which these steps were taken, their long term result for the Communists would be extremely adverse militarily. Yet on February 13, he was overheard (by telephone intercept) to tell Brezhnev of "a great possibility of achieving the aim, if the Vietnamese will understand the present situation that we have passed to them; they will have to decide. All they need to do is to give a confidential declaration." (2/13/67)

¹In private dealings, however, the Russians apparently were not quite so aloof. This topic is treated in other studies of negotiating sequences. During Sunflower, too, there are cryptic allusions to earlier Soviet interventions. Thus Kosygin told Thompson on February 18 that "even earlier than Sunflower, the USSR had sought a political settlement."

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Kosygin may not have understood the full import of the proposals he was transmitting. He may also have been quite willing to subordinate DRV interests to the Soviet desire to avoid further escalation in Vietnam. Nonetheless, his lack of a critical, analytical, bargaining attitude toward the proposals he was transmitting to Hanoi suggests that he did not endorse them, but served as a more or less neutral agent of transmission. His intermediation no doubt put the DRV under obligation to respond seriously and with full explanations of their decisions. This is a form of pressure, perhaps, but not a strong one. Had he wished to invoke his full powers of persuasion, he should have tried for proposals he could support--or at least for terms which, with the least possible further modification, would seem palatable to Hanoi.

In a retrospective discussion with Thompson in Moscow, Kosygin expressed a jaundiced view of the role of mediators, saying they either complicated the problem or pretended they were doing something when in fact they were not. (2/18/67) He had stepped into this uncomfortable spot in London because "the Vietnamese had for the first time stated they (were) ready to negotiate if the bombings were stopped unconditionally; this was the first time they had done so and it was a public statement." This could mean that the Trinh statement had given him a green light that formerly was lacking. Of course, as suggested earlier, the Trinh statement itself may have been issued in part as a result of Soviet pressures. But the general picture, though only faintly sketched in the materials at hand, is of considerable Soviet deference to Hanoi's views on this critical matter.

Rapacki, visiting London on February 22, replied tersely but tartly to probing on this issue. Asked about Kosygin's influence in Hanoi, Rapacki described it to Brown as "not less than yours." Asked which country, China or Russia, had greater influence over North Vietnam, Rapacki replied, "North Vietnam." (3/1/67)

How much the Russians had hoped in fact to accomplish during Kosygin's London trip is impossible to know. They apparently harbored few expectations after his return. Kosygin complained to Thompson about the "ultimatum" implied in the final proposal he transmitted to Hanoi from London, saying that he knew it was hopeless the minute he read it. He said the Soviets were not confident that the US proposals had been serious, and that he could not venture to propose anything constructive at that time.¹ (2/17/67)

¹In a remarkable aside, he recalled that he personally had been in Hanoi when the US began bombing the DRV. "Why did not the US turn to him at that time and explain to him its problems?" he asked. What he would have done about them he left unsaid.

The fact that he dwelt on the "ultimatum," with a deadline he could hardly hope to meet, rather than the terms of the US proposal--which were adverse to the Communists from a military point of view--also suggests that he was as much aroused by his personal embarrassment as by the US position with respect to settlement terms, bargaining toughness, etc.

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When Bundy inquired of Zinchuk as to whether the Soviets had lost credit in Hanoi as a result of their handling of the London visit, the reply was firmly negative. Zinchuk said that "Hanoi continued to look to the Soviets to arrange a settlement that would protect their interests." (2/17/67) This reply is obviously self-serving. To the extent that it is true, it again suggests the Russians were restrained in their advocacy vis-a-vis Hanoi.

No explanation is really satisfactory for Soviet behavior. The Kosygin-Brezhnev telephone conversation is inexplicable. Soviet willingness to transmit virtual ultimatums is only slightly less inexplicable. The very fact of intermediation, however, was important. No matter how much the Soviets disassociated themselves from the U.S. proposals, their willingness to transmit them was a form of pressure on the DRV. To the extent that Sunflower was a "serious" exchange, the Russians were probably playing a low cost game for the breaks.

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IX. A New Geneva Conference?

Kosygin's public reference to the UK-USSR Geneva co-chairmanship aroused British hopes that the Russians would join them in reconvening a Conference along the lines of 1954. (2/8/67) When they asked him if his remarks indicated a willingness to proceed in that direction, he replied that this was "not exactly" what he had meant to imply. "I proceeded upon the assumption that the main thing was for the UK and the Soviet Union to assist the two sides to meet together after the bombing stopped. After this has been done, there may be various proposals for moving further. The Geneva Conference could be convened even without China." (2/9/67, emphasis supplied.) He emphasized that it was important to "do first things first."

Noting the bombing pause that would occur during Tet, Brown pressed him to think about asking the US not to resume and calling for a Geneva Conference to meet as soon as February 15. Kosygin said he would first want to know Hanoi's views. A Geneva Conference would be a "complicated issue." China would create difficulties. "There are Chinese troops in North Vietnam." There was also a pro-Chinese faction in Hanoi. "I could send this to Hanoi," he said, "but I am concerned about the difficulties." He decided finally to "think it over" and asked to have a proposition from the British in writing. (2/9/67) In the end, this topic was dropped, with no indication from the Russians as to what response they received from Hanoi--if indeed they ever put the issue to Hanoi at all.

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X. The Shadow of China

As with Marigold, the chronicle of Sunflower is peppered with emotional but extremely vague references to the role of the Chinese: their antagonism toward a negotiated settlement in Vietnam, and their baleful influence on the decision making processes in Hanoi. The British found Kosygin in London "obsessed" with the Chinese and said he talked about them "the way Pakistanis talk about Indians." (2/6/67)

In his post mortem with Thompson in Moscow, Kosygin said his public endorsement of negotiations in London had provoked "fury" in Peking, but that the Chinese had been the winners in the end when his efforts failed. Their assessment of the futility of negotiations had been given increased credibility in Hanoi. The Chinese wanted the conflict to continue and expand. And they had aspirations in India, Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines, etc. (2/17/67)

These remarks were obviously intended to put the US in a more concessionary frame of mind. However, at the end of the interview, Kosygin adverted to another topic, one that also arose during Marigold: As Thompson turned the conversation away from Vietnam, Kosygin interrupted to ask him directly "if the Chinese had approached the US re (the) possibility of negotiations on Vietnam." Thompson conjectured afterward that he may have thought the Chinese encouraged the US to start negotiations knowing they would fail and thus lead to actions increasing the likelihood of a US-Soviet confrontation. (2/19/67) The fact that this question was posed more than once and in quite different forms by Lewandowski the previous fall, though, suggests deeper suspicions of a Sino-US understanding adverse to the interests of the Soviet Union and its followers.

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XI. The End of Sunflower

With the resumption of bombing on February 13, after the Tet Truce, it was relatively clear to all parties that talks were unlikely to occur. However, events played themselves out with some surprises.

Ho answered the President's letter with a brusque, if as yet unpublished, rejection on February 15. In handing the reply to our DCM in Moscow, the DRV representative added several points orally: (1) The US was "obstinate" in continuing to advance conditions for stopping the bombing. (2) The US had used the Moscow contact to deceive public opinion into believing that secret negotiations were going on while the bombing continued. This may have been a reference to news leaks from London about Sunflower, or from Washington and many other points about Marigold. (3) The proposal for extending the Tet bombing halt was an ultimatum. (4) The DRV wished no further contact in Moscow. (2/15/67)

The tone and substance of these communications was frosty, but the fact that they had not been made public left the possibility that the rejection might not be final, as the Secretary remarked to Dobrynin on February 23. Even this slender hope was destroyed on March 15, however, when Hanoi published the Johnson-Ho exchange of letters.

Since the President's letter referred to possible future meetings "in Moscow, where contacts have already occurred," Hanoi's publication of it confirmed to the world, including the Chinese and the Vietnamese Communists, that such contacts had indeed taken place. This is notable, in contrast with Hanoi's great insistence of secrecy in the opening phases of the Sunflower and its complaints about publicity when the Moscow contact was closed down.

Hanoi's decision to publish the letters was undoubtedly based on the conviction that it would look appreciably more peace-loving than the U.S. Never having violated the secrecy of contacts before or since, Hanoi had to be sure of its ground and the costs in terms of future U.S. communications and the morale of its own people. Equally, if not more important, Hanoi could have calculated that public disclosure of US-DRV contact could have made the GVN leaders more than uneasy.

The US tried nonetheless to keep the door to talks open and even to resume direct contacts through another letter from the President to Ho. The message discussed the general benefits of a peaceful solution, based on the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Accords, and urged the DRV to enter talks toward that end. It made no specific proposals on de-escalation or settlement terms. It was hand carried to the DRV Embassy in Moscow on April 6, but returned by the Vietnamese to the U.S. Embassy mail box on the same day with the original envelope having been opened, then marked "non conforme! Retour a l'expediteur."

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Addendum: Hindsight on Marigold

There were many allusions to Marigold during Sunflower, but only a modest amount of additional (often ambiguous) information:

--On February 17, Zinchuk told Bundy that the Soviets had gone back over Marigold with Hanoi and ascertained firmly that it had been "willing to talk, in the sense of exchanging views." The contact had been cancelled, he claimed, because of the December 13-14 bombing of Hanoi. (2/17/67)

--On February 23, Dobrynin told Rusk that the DRV Charge in Moscow came to the Soviet Foreign Ministry on December 15 to say that the DRV had instructed Rapacki to break off his talks with the US, "on the ground that the bombing just before that date meant the US thought it could pressure Hanoi to talk." (2/23/67)

--On December 23, Rapacki claimed to Brown that "after firm agreement on the original 10-point package, Lodge had consulted Washington and then reneged by raising new (unspecified) questions and points of interpretations. Before the Poles had a chance to do anything with these the December 13-14 bombings occurred, killing the entire project."

--On March 23, Dobrynin told Bundy "that the Poles had given the Soviets an entirely different picture than the one we (the US) had presented of who had taken the initiative for the Warsaw contacts and by implication the statement of the US position. The inescapable implication was that the Poles had represented to the Soviets that the USG had initiated the Lewandowski channel and that the USG had either drafted or endorsed the Lewandowski formulation and urged that it be presented to Hanoi." Dobrynin reiterated that the "bombing of December 13-14 had caused clear Hanoi rejection of the Warsaw meeting."

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January 1, 1967 - New York Times

Special to The New York Times

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., Dec. 31 - Following are the texts of a letter yesterday by Secretary General Thant to Arthur J. Goldberg, the chief United States delegate, and of Mr. Goldberg's reply today:

Thant's Letter

.

Let me take this opportunity of reiterating my three-point program, to which I still firmly adhere:

1. The cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam;
2. The scaling down of all military activities by all sides in South Vietnam;
3. The willingness to enter into discussions with those who are actually fighting.

I strongly believe that this three-point program, of which the cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam is the first and essential part, is necessary to create the possibility of fruitful discussions leading to a just and honorable settlement of the problem of Vietnam on the basis of the Geneva Agreements of 1954.

I also wish to recall that in the course of the twenty-first session, in the debate of the General Assembly, the majority of the delegations have endorsed the three-point program. Many more heads of delegations also specifically pleaded for the cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam. It seems to me that this is a very clear indication of the public opinion of the world at large on this issue.

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Goldberg's Letter

.

We have carefully reflected on your ideas, expressed in your Dec. 30 letter and on previous occasions, about the cessation of bombing of North Vietnam. . . . I wish to assure you categorically that my Government is prepared to take the first step toward peace: specifically, we are ready to order a prior end to all bombing of North Vietnam the moment there is an assurance, private or otherwise, that there would be a reciprocal response toward peace from North Vietnam.

I am, thus reaffirming herewith an offer made before the General

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Assembly-on Sept. 22 and again on Oct. 18. We hope and trust that you will use every means at your disposal to determine what tangible response there would be from North Vietnam in the wake of such a prior step toward peace on our part.

. . . .

January 2, 1967

BEHIND THE LINES-HANOI, By Harrison E. Salisbury
(pp. 175-177) Chapter XVIII

. . . .

He (Pham Van Dong) then went into a discussion of the so-called "four points," the four points which Hanoi said constituted the "basis for a settlement of the Vietnam question."

There had been great controversy abroad about the significance of these four points. Were they to be considered pre-conditions for negotiation? Must the United States accept them before Hanoi would agree to sit down at a conference table?

The four points provided for (1) recognition of the peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam and the withdrawal of United States troops; (2) the noninterference of outside powers in the two zones of Vietnam; (3) settlement of South Vietnamese questions in accordance with the program of the National Liberation Front without foreign interference; and (4) peaceful reunification of Vietnam, to be settled by the people of both zones.

The attitude of the United States was that Hanoi was attempting to impose terms for a settlement before a conference, that the North Vietnamese insisted that the four points must be accepted first and that this meant talk at the conference table would be largely meaningless.

"These should not be considered 'conditions,'" Pham Van Dong now told me. "They are merely truths. The most simple thing is to recognize our sovereignty and our independence. It involves only recognizing the points in the Geneva agreements."

He said that the United States did not like to accept the four points and especially the third point about South Vietnam but, he insisted, we must come to a solution on the basis of the four points.

"Whichever way you may go around, finally you must come to the four points," he said. There were not preconditions nor conditions for talks, he said, but "conditions for a valid settlement" -- conditions necessary to reach a settlement which could be enforced.

When my dispatch reporting this discussion was published in The New York Times, it touched off a flurry of speculation, centering on the

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thought that Pham Van Dong had modified in some way the position of the Hanoi regime on the four points. This was not my understanding. I knew that on previous occasions the same interpretation had been presented by spokesmen for the North Vietnamese Government.

They had contended from the start that these were not "preconditions." However, the speculation in the West reached such intensity that the Foreign Ministry called on me and said they were going to issue a brief statement to dampen this down. They were careful to note that the faulty interpretation was not mine but that of Western commentators.

When this was done, the furor gradually died away because the essence of the situation was now clear. The four conditions did not have to be accepted before we sat down at the conference table, but they would be placed on the table as the key points of the settlement which was to be negotiated. To me the whole thing seemed to be a distinction without a real difference. I did not believe that Pham Van Dong meant that the four points were to be considered an agenda in the normal understanding of the term--four points which might be modified or compromised to meet the views of the two sides. I felt that he meant--as Hanoi had from the start--that the settlement must be constructed on this framework.

Whether there would be any give on the Hanoi side was another matter. There might well be in the end. But certainly there was no indication of it in the words he spoke to me about the four points.

He placed alongside his four points another one: that the United States halt unconditionally the bombing and all hostile activity against the North.

So far as the United States was concerned, he took the view that it was not really ready for discussions. It had not, in his view, given any sign of goodwill, and he felt this was essential if good-faith negotiations were to get under way. The pattern of American conduct, as he viewed it, was to talk peace only to mask preparations for escalation.

"Of course," he said, giving me a knowing look, "I understand this better than you because there are many things I can't tell you."

.....

January 3, 1967

On January 3, the British Minister, Michael Stewart, gave two cables to Assistant Secretary Bundy. The first cable, dated January 2, was from the UK Consul General Colvin in Hanoi stating that Harrison Salisbury told him the DRV had treated him as an unofficial emissary (he was not) and had given him two clear impressions at ministerial level: (a) in return for the cessation of bombing and of troop increases, Hanoi would be prepared to make military concessions and would negotiate; (b) the DRV want urgently

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to discuss this with the USG on a clandestine basis but do not know how to arrange it. Salisbury, who was seeing Pham van Dong that afternoon, asked for advice. Colvin told him the proposed discussion could depend on his ability to provide the USG with reliable confirmation from the Prime Minister that concessions would include a halt to North Vietnamese infiltration of the South. Impressions were not enough.

January 4, 1967

On the following day (Jan. 4), the UK Foreign Secretary instructed the UK Embassy to bring this cable to the Secretary's attention and to say that, if Salisbury is reporting faithfully, the North Vietnamese are getting very close to the package that the Secretary authorized Brown to put to the Soviet leaders last November in Moscow. This being so, he said, we must take it seriously. British facilities were to be available for any communication the US wished to make to Hanoi. Furthermore, if the US wishes, Colvin could ask Salisbury to tell the DRV that British facilities are available as a secure channel of communication if they wish to arrange clandestine discussions, now or when Salisbury has left.

That evening, the Secretary gave the following message to the British Minister, Michael Stewart, for delivery to Foreign Secretary Brown:

a. Ask Colvin to inform Salisbury that he, Colvin, has reported to his government--and they in turn to us--on Salisbury's conversations "at ministerial level". Colvin should tell Salisbury that the USG would greatly appreciate a full account by Salisbury of any and all conversations bearing on the issues of negotiation, cessation of bombing, or any related matters, to be transmitted securely through Colvin's facilities.

b. Colvin should also give Salisbury a message from us that, if his conversations have followed the line reported to Colvin, they could be of great importance. Hence, and having in mind Hanoi's concern for the Chinese Communists in particular, Colvin should emphasize to Salisbury that any such conversations be conducted on a strictly clandestine basis. Even if nothing develops from such conversations, it could be important to the success of possible future clandestine contacts that Salisbury's talks remain secure.

c. If in fact senior members of the Hanoi government have suggested, or should suggest, clandestine direct talks with the US, Salisbury is authorized by us to tell the North Vietnamese that he can convey this to us through the British secure channel, or that we will be prepared to receive such message directly from the North Vietnamese through direct diplomatic contacts at any capital where we both maintain posts. Salisbury should convey to the North Vietnamese that we place the highest priority on finding a mutually agreeable, completely secure arrangement for exchanging communications with them, and we will attempt to meet any suggestions they have to offer to achieve this end.

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d. We are most grateful for the prompt British report and for the offer of their communications facilities.

e. This message comes personally from the Secretary to George Brown. The Secretary is briefing Michael Stewart on a separate matter which may be relevant to the foregoing this evening.

January 5, 1967

On January 5, the British Minister gave us two cables from the UK Consul General in Hanoi, dated January 4. Colvin had met with Salisbury on the afternoon of January 4 who had made the following points: (a) he will report the essence of his four hour conversation with Pham van Dong only to the Secretary; (b) the Prime Minister had treated him as an actual or potential emissary; (c) he would not use the British cipher facilities; (d) when asked if clandestine discussions had been suggested, he said this subject must be reserved for the Secretary; (e) his articles will not include reference to negotiations, etc., (f) he thought that the NVN Government "had gone further than even before, and if there were any receptivity in the US Administration there were grounds for further exploration;" (g) he said the results must not be exaggerated but he thought Colvin could be encouraged. However, he was concerned about the ability of the USG to keep the negotiations truly clandestine; and (h) he hoped to leave Hanoi on January 7, arriving in Washington on January 11.

Colvin concluded that clandestine discussions had been discussed and that Salisbury is sharply conscious of the need for clandestinity. At this point, Colvin had not been able to convey the Secretary's message (para. 3) to Salisbury.

That afternoon Scotty Reston advised the Secretary that Salisbury had an 8,000 word memcon of his talk with Pham van Dong which Reston does not know whether Salisbury will be allowed to bring out. Reston also stated that Salisbury had asked permission to stay in Hanoi another five or six days but the status of his request was unknown.

On the same day, we instructed our Ambassadors in the posts where he is most likely to be seen first (a) to offer Salisbury our private cable facilities to report to us, and (b) to caution him strongly against divulging any North Vietnamese confidences until he has reported in full to us and we can gauge whether he has received significant signals (State's 113504).

STATE 112967 (to Amembassy MOSCOW), TS/Nodis
Ref: Moscow 2887

You should seek appointment directly with departing NVN Ambassador and deliver the following message:

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QUOTE: Although the USG has attempted to deliver the following message to the North Vietnamese authorities indirectly in the last few days, we would appreciate it if he would make sure that those authorities are informed directly by him upon his return to Hanoi as follows: The USG places the highest priority in finding a mutually agreeable, completely secure arrangements for exchanging communications with the government of the DRV about the possibilities of achieving a peaceful settlement of the Vietnamese dispute. If the DRV is willing to explore such possibilities with us we will attempt to meet any suggestion they have to offer regarding the time and place of such discussions and we will be prepared to receive such information directly from the North Vietnamese through direct diplomatic contacts at any capital where we both maintain posts or otherwise. END QUOTE

Slug any reply NODIS/SUNFLOWER

THE SECRETARY.

January 6, 1967

MOSCOW 2916 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Rec'd 1341, 6 Jan 67
Ref: State 112967

1. After abortive attempt at noon, Akalovsky delivered with considerable difficulty following letter to Hoang Man'ty, First Secretary DRV Embassy, at 3 p.m. today:

A. Begin quote. Dear Mr. Ambassador: I have been instructed to deliver to you personally a confidential message from my government. I am prepared to call on you for that purpose at your earliest convenience. Please let me know when you would be available to receive me. Sincerely yours, John C. Guthrie, Charge D'Affaires Ad Interim, United States of America. End Quote.

2. Ty said he would deliver letter to Ambassador Kinh, but would not comment on mode of any reply. He did confirm Kinh leaving soon.

3. If and when Kinh receives me, I intend hand him in writing statement beginning quote the USG places . . . where we both maintain posts or otherwise end quote. And convey initial portion orally.

4. Assume Kinh will wish to touch base with Hanoi before receiving me and it therefore may be day or two before any reply received.

GUTHRIE

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January 10, 1967

MOSCOW 2966 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Rec'd 1133, 10 Jan 67
Ref: Moscow 2950

1. ...I met with DRV Minister-Counselor Le Chang at 11 a.m. today, at DRV Embassy....
2. ...I delivered message contained in State 112967....
3. ...Le Chang then delivered brief tirade which struck me as pro forma, asserting that recent action by US show it continues intensify aggression in Vietnam and continues intensify its campaign of treachery and dupery regarding peace, and that it clear from everything there no good will on US part....
5. As I was about to leave building, Le Chang came running after me and said he wanted make sure our meeting was confidential....

GUTHRIE

January 15, 1967

The highlight of Salisbury's account to the Secretary concerned remarks by Pham Van Dong in response to his questions. Salisbury pressed him to make some response if the US were to stop bombing and Pham Van Dong made four replies:

- a. Once the US had halted its air attacks on the North, "as far as we are concerned we will take an appropriate stand."
- b. "If the US really wants a settlement, the first thing is to have good will. Of course we know what we should do if the US shows good will. If they stop the whole war, we know what we should do. If they stop doing harm to the North, we know what we should do."
- c. "The moment the US puts and end to the way, we will respect each other and settle every question."
- d. With the cessation of hostilities, "we can speak about other things. After this, there will be no lack of generosity on our part."

Our net judgment is that these statements are interesting mood music but do not get us very far. The first two statements are replays of earlier statements to Sainteny and Petri. The latter two statements appear to be without substance.

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Salisbury's report contained three other interesting elements: (a) there is a deep conviction in Hanoi that our resolve will falter because of the cost of the struggle; (b) there is concern in Hanoi about the consequences of the crisis in China; (c) Hanoi had two basic concerns about negotiations: (1) the Chicom pistol in their back and (2) the possibility that the morale and discipline of the Northern forces and the Viet Cong would falter. We take the latter point seriously (Memorandum to the President, January 15).

January 17, 1967

MOSCOW 3066 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Rec'd 1015, 17 Jan 67
Ref: Moscow 3061

. . . .

2. Le Chang said purpose of his asking for this meeting was to seek clarification certain points in U.S. Government's message DCM delivered to him January 10. For DRV Government to be able give message serious study, following necessary:

A. Explanation of specific meaning phrase "completely secure arrangement" in message; and

B. Clarification U.S. position on settlement Vietnam problem.

3. . . . he indicated some sense of urgency by inquiring whether response could be expected soon, even this week. . . .

. . . .

THOMPSON.

STATE 120058 (to Amembassy MOSCOW), TS/Nodis, Sent 2245, 17 Jan 67

1. In conversation with Harriman last night, Dobrynin said he understood that our order concerning bombing within ten nautical miles of the center of Hanoi still stood on an indefinite basis. Harriman challenged this and said that while we were continuing the order for the present, we did not consider ourselves bound to do so indefinitely. Dobrynin asked for clarification, stating that he believed Moscow understood it in this sense, based on Bundy disclosure to Zinchuk on December 27 of proposal made in Warsaw on December 24. (This of course was prior to negative response through Polish channel on December 29.)

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TOP SECRET - NODIS

2. We are informing Dobrynin quietly here that negative response of December 29 in Warsaw necessarily meant that we did not feel ourselves bound to maintain the order indefinitely. At the same time, we were continuing the order for the present and watching developments closely.

3. Your instructions on Vietnam also discuss the possibility of secret talks with DRV and indicate we have had no reply. In light of latest developments, we believe you should say that we as yet have no clear indication of DRV willingness for such talks. We simply cannot guess whether DRV has informed Soviets of our message or their latest reply, and we believe it best to protect ourselves from any charge of disclosure to any party or government. If you think it wise, you might omit discussions of this point entirely while simply reiterating our willingness for direct secret talks.

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

STATE 120335 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, Sent 2430, 17 Jan 67
Ref: Moscow 3066

Literally Eyes Only for Ambassador and DCM

Following is to be held until an execute order is received:

1. Guthrie should seek appointment soonest with DRV Charge to convey message below.

2. Message is:

a. By "completely secure arrangement" USG has in mind discussions between DRV and US representatives that would not repeat not be disclosed to any other government or party whatsoever unless by mutual agreement, and that would be subject to the strictest precautions against press or public inquiry. USG is able to assure DRV that earlier message has not been disclosed to anyone.

b. We believe DRV already has considerable information by both public and private means, of US position on settlement of Viet-Nam problem, and has also received formulations from others in contact with USG. USG for its part has studied public and private statements by DRV representatives. We believe discussions should seek to establish whether common ground now exists for an acceptable settlement.

c. In discussions, USG would be prepared to consider any topic that DRV felt should be included. For illustration, topics USG would be prepared to discuss would include following:

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- (1) Arrangements for the reduction or the cessation of hostilities.
- (2) Essential elements of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962, including withdrawal of any forces coming from outside South Viet-Nam and now present there.
- (3) Arrangements for a free determination by North Viet-Nam and South Viet-Nam on the issue of reunification.
- (4) Recognition of the independence and territorial integrity of North and South Viet-Nam, or of all Viet-Nam if the people should choose reunification.
- (5) The international posture of South Viet-Nam, including relationships with other nations.
- (6) Appropriate provisions relating to the internal political structure of South Viet-Nam, including freedom from reprisals and free political participation.
- (7) Appropriate objective means for insuring the integrity of all provisions agreed to.

d. The topics thus listed could be considered in any order, and the USG would be prepared to consider any additional topics the DRV would propose.

3. You should put these points in writing. In addition, you should note orally that while USG is prepared to conduct discussions under a completely secure arrangement at any place the DRV may wish, USG believes there are many advantages in Moscow. USG senior representatives in Moscow are fully equipped and can be supported security and without personnel moves that might attract attention. We believe physical security in Moscow can be maintained subject to appropriate safeguards.

4. As these instructions indicate, we believe our first response should be a listing of topics. However, we recognize possibility that Guthrie might be probed further about substance of USG position. He should seek to avoid going beyond this, indicating that very purpose of discussions would be to develop positions on both sides. If but only if DRV Charge should refer to MARIGOLD ten points (which you have as attachment to Dobrynin-Rusk memocon of January 5), Guthrie should be familiar with these and should respond that, as we believe has been indicated to DRV, we believe this formulation would be satisfactory basis for more detailed discussion of the points contained therein.

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

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STATE 120458 (to AmEmbassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, Sent 0403, 18 Jan 67
Ref: State 120335

You may execute.

RUSK (Drafted by Mr. Read).

January 19, 1967

MOSCOW 3089 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Rec'd 0957, 19 Jan 67
Ref: State 120453

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2. Unless instructed to contrary, DCM will touch very lightly on Moscow as site for discussions (para. 3 State 120335). Our movements and telephone calls are, of course, reported to KGB by chauffers and operators and it must be assumed that DRV Embassy is not secure from Soviet eavesdropping. It will also be almost impossible keep repeated calls at DRV Embassy from Western press representatives indefinitely. From DRV viewpoint, Moscow would be doubtful choice owing predictable ChiCom reaction.

THOMPSON

January 20, 1967

MOSCOW 3126 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Rec'd 1713, 20 Jan 67
Ref: Moscow 3089

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4. Le Chang said would transmit our response to his government and would meet with us again after receiving further instructions. He did not probe further.

5. Apart from important fact that Le Chang indicated dialogue would continue, believe his comportment during meetings may also be of significance. Except for his pro forma attack on US at initial meeting January 10 (Moscow 2966), he has refrained from making any acrimonious statements and his attitude at meetings, relaxed from outset, is now bordering on friendly; he is even willing to be drawn into occasional small talk. As department will recall, this is in marked contrast with his attitude during one meeting he was willing have with Ambassador Kohler year ago.

THOMPSON

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January 21, 1967

STATE 123196 (to Amembassy Moscow), S/Nodis
Ref: Moscow 3126

1. We are a little disturbed at reported Guthrie statement that we felt agenda should be clear before talks commence. This is not repeat not our thought, as we ourselves might wish to add topics, and above all do not wish to get into any dispute on agenda. . . .

. . . .

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

January 27, 1967

MOSCOW 3218 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Rec'd 1503, 27 Jan 67
Ref: Moscow 3194

. . . .

2. . . . Le Chang said he has asked for meeting to deliver, for transmittal to US Govt, DRV Govt's Aide-Memoire containing response to US Govt message given to him January 10.

. . . .

A. The United States is intensifying the war in South Vietnam and escalating the bombing of North Vietnam. President Johnson has made clear his scheme to go on intensifying the war of aggression against Vietnam. But the Vietnamese people are determined to fight for their fundamental national rights and the United States is doomed to dismal defeat.

B. The United States talks peace but makes war. The conditions which the United States demands the Vietnamese people to accept are absurd and arrogant. "Conditional suspension of bombing", "conditional withdrawal of troops" are in fact schemes to cling to South Vietnam, to turn South Vietnam into a new-type colony and a military base of the United States, to prolong indefinitely the partition of Vietnam.

C. The four-point stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam embodies the fundamental principles and the main provisions of the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam. It is the basis for the most correct political solution to the Vietnam problem. The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has declared that if the United States really wants peace and seeks a political solution, it must recognize the four-point stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the five-point statement of South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, the only genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people.

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D. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam is an independent and sovereign country. The U.S. bombing of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is a blatant act of aggression. The United States must end immediately and unconditionally the bombing and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. That is the urgent demand on the people of all countries, of all men of common sense throughout the world. The unconditional cessation of bombing and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam being materialized, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam could then exchange views with the United States concerning the place or date for contact between the two parties as the Government of the United States proposed in its message handed over on January 10, 1967.
End text.

5. Le Chang added that, as to US views--including several points--conveyed to him January 20, his side would comment on them "at appropriate time." In response DCM's query if he understood correctly that Aide-Memoire is in response to January 10 message and that there no response yet to points contained January 20 paper, Le Chang said this understanding accurate and repeated that comments on latter paper would be made "at appropriate time."

6. DCM took this opportunity make point in para. 2 State 123196. Le Chang said he fully understood.

7. Le Chang then said he wished stress certain points concerning "intensification of war with us." Asserting US continuing escalate war and commit "barbarous crimes" against Vietnamese people in both parts Vietnam, cited following examples recent "most serious escalation":

- A. Destruction of Ben Xue in SVN;
- B. "Barbarous murders" in Iron Triangle;
- C. Bombings "densely populated" NVN areas of Viet Tri, Thai Nguyen, Ning Bing, and Thang Hoa.

No signature (cable probably incomplete).

STATE 127220 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, Sent 2443, 27 Jan 67
Ref: Moscow 3218

Secretary would appreciate receiving your views about DRV message in ref tel.

Some of the questions about the message which have been raised in our minds are as follows:

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(1) Are we now, in effect, facing the start of a dialogue with the other side staking out an opening extreme position?

(2) What inference do you draw from Charge's statement that comments on January 20 paper would be made "at appropriate time": - do you read this to mean that we will hear again from him in a few days or that their further response to January 20 message will come only after cessation of bombing, etc.?

(3) What is your reading of the evident concern indicated in para. 4a and 7 of our "intensification" and "escalation"? (Incidentally, we have not been able to identify "Ben Xue" in para. 7(a))

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Do you have any indication of Soviet awareness of Guthrie/Charge talks? Is it safe to assume that Kosygin's reference to "latest (Vietnam) news not good" as reported Moscow 3213 preceded reftel discussions and was not a veiled reference to latter?

KATZENBACH (Drafted by B. H. Read: J. P. Walsh)

January 28, 1967

MOSCOW 3231 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Rec'd 1051, 28 Jan 67
Ref: State 127220

1. DRV message strikes me as first round in oriental rug trading. Le Chang's emphasis on secrecy at each contact seems encouraging but you will note that text carefully drafted for possible publication. Suggest our reply should also be drafted with possible necessity of eventual publication in mind.

2. Believe QTE appropriate time UNQTE means after cessation of bombing but this ploy gives them the possibility of continuing the dialogue if we should break off talks or give completely negative reply their last message.

3. Concern over escalation may indicate they are hurting and also may be effort to exploit experience of Warsaw talks to hold down our bombing activity. Possibility exists that they may be concerned that further escalation will bring strong internal pressure to call for volunteers or other dangerous moves on their part. At Guthrie's request, place names were handed to him in writing. On reexamination appears to be Ben Xuc rpt Xuc.

4. Do not believe Kosygin was making veiled reference to these discussions. We can be almost certain that Soviet chauffeur would have reported Guthrie's visits to KGB. Suggest that at next meeting Guthrie might point out that fact of contacts almost certainly known to Soviets

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and ask whether if queried by them we could confirm we had been in contact but not inform them of substance of talks.

5. Re future procedure following appear to be alternatives.

A. Stop bombing DRV and press for prompt meeting or alternatively state we are doing so on assumption there will be prompt meeting and mutual de-escalation.

B. State that as evidence of good faith we will confine bombing to infiltration routes in southern part of DRV and press for prompt meeting.

C. Assuming foregoing not acceptable send carefully drafted written reply which would leave us in good position if publication forced by them supplemented as necessary by oral remarks. Reply might be based on the fourteen points or Polish ten points. On bombing we might say we deplore the loss of life on both sides but point out that use of violence is not one-sided and we would welcome mutual cessation.

D. Another possibility would be simply to go back with questions about paragraph C of their reply. What do they mean by "recognize" the four and five point statements. Are they asking for our capitulation? Although we have indicated we are prepared to discuss their points we cannot agree that the NLF is QTE the only genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people UNQTE.

THOMPSON

Hanoi VNA International Service in English 0150 GMT 28 January 1967--B
(FBIS, Far East, 30 January 1967)

(Text) Hanoi, 28 January--Nguyen Duy Trinh, DRV foreign minister, has granted an interview to Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett. Questions and answers follow:

1. Question: Mr. Minister, what in your view are the most significant recent developments in the Vietnam war, and what are the prospects for the immediate future?

Answer: The U.S. imperialists are waging the most barbarous war of aggression against our country, threatening more and more seriously peace in southeast Asia and the world. But they have sustained heavy defeats in South and in North Vietnam. The people of South Vietnam, fighting with great heroism, have foiled all their military plans in spite of the commitments of over 1 million U.S., puppet, and satellite troops. The people of North Vietnam have not been and will never be cowed by the barbarous bombing raids of the U.S. imperialists and have dealt them well-deserved counterblows.

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All Vietnamese people are resolutely fighting against the U.S. aggressors to defend their sacred national rights and fulfill their duty to the peoples of the friendly countries now struggling for their independence and freedom. The four-point stand of the DRV Government is a stand of independence and peace, and it is the expression of the fundamental principles and the main provisions of the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam. It is the basis for the most correct political solution to the Vietnam problem, a basis which fully meets the deep aspirations of the Vietnamese people, and fully conforms to the spirit of the five-point statement of the NFLSV, the only genuine representative of the people of South Vietnam.

The peoples of the world, including very large sections of the population of the United States itself, more and more strongly support our just stand and demand ever more firmly that the U.S. imperialists stop their war of aggression in Vietnam and let the Vietnamese people settle their own affairs themselves.

The U.S. imperialists talk of peace negotiations, but they still show great obduracy. President Johnson recently stated with impudence that he will go on intensifying and expanding the war of aggression in an attempt to cling to the south and to prolong the partition of Vietnam. But however perfidious the maneuvers of the U.S. imperialists may be, the Vietnamese people, united as one man and fearing neither hardships nor sacrifices, are determined to carry on their resistance war to the end to safeguard the independence and freedom of the fatherland, and contribute to the maintenance of peace in southeast Asia and the world.

The Vietnamese people will win. The U.S. imperialist aggressors will be defeated.

2. Question: In the face of documentary evidence and eyewitness reports from foreign witnesses, including American journalists, Washington continues to claim that U.S. aircraft have been striking only at military targets and not at civilian targets in North Vietnam. What are your views on this subject?

Answer: The DRV is an independent and sovereign country and the U.S. imperialists have absolutely no right to violate this independence and sovereignty.

U.S. bombing of any point of its territory, whether a military or a civilian target, is a blatant act of aggression and an unpardonable crime. It is an undeniable fact that civilian targets in North Vietnam have been attacked. The peoples of the world, including large sections of the American people, are strongly protesting against the U.S. imperialists' savage acts of aggression.

The U.S. imperialists must stop definitively and unconditionally the bombing raids and all other acts of war against the DRV.

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3. Question: The United States has spoken of the need for dialog or contact between itself and the DRV. Would you comment on this statement?

Answer: The United States has made such statements, but in its deeds it has shown the utmost obduracy and perfidy and continues the escalation, stepping up and expanding the aggressive war. If it really wants talks, it must first halt unconditionally the bombing raids and all other acts of war against the DRV. It is only after the unconditional cessation of U.S. bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV that there could be talks between the DRV and the United States.

The four-point stand and the correct attitude of the DRV Government enjoy, we are sure, ever stronger approval and support from all peace loving and justice-loving peoples and governments in the world. If the United States refuses to listen to reason, it will further unmask itself as an obdurate aggressor. The Vietnamese people are determined to fight until total victory to defend the north, liberate the south, achieve the peaceful reunification of the fatherland, and contribute to the maintenance of peace in this area and in the world.

January 30, 1967

STATE 128175 (to Amembassy Moscow & Saigon), S/Nodis, Sent 0318, 31 Jan 67.

For Ambassador from Secretary

1. Separate circular from FBIS will contain key parts of Burchett interview with DRV Foreign Minister published Jan 28 and Nhan Dan commentary of Jan 29. We interpret these as all-out efforts to build up public pressures on us to stop bombing in return for talks. We also note that Burchett interview substantially reduces link to acceptance of four points, although Nhan Dan commentary implies such link by quoting Ho letter of January 1966.
2. Apart from these public statements, we are repeating to all addressees Cairo 4214 and New Delhi 10807. These report simultaneous DRV approaches in Cairo and New Delhi, asking them to convey message to us which both UAR and GOI have interpreted as message that Hanoi would be prepared to talk if we stopped bombing. You will note that Indian message contains intriguing reference to absence of "publicly stated" conditions, and we will be seeking clarification through New Delhi.
3. For Moscow: We believe this background is essential for any discussions of Vietnam you may have in next few days. If DRV is going all-out to put pressure on us to stop bombing, we would expect Soviets to join in the cry on much more forceful basis than they have done in the past. You should counter by using our standard position from Goldberg speech of September and our other exchanges with the Soviets. In addition, you should point to grave practical problem -- which we believe Soviets might actually

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understand although not conceding it -- of situation in which we stop bombing, Hanoi continued its actions, and we were thus under great pressure to resume. If we stop bombing and the North Vietnamese make no overt albeit unannounced reciprocal gesture it would be impossible to avoid widespread speculation and indeed an assumption that talks were in fact going on. This would jeopardize the secrecy which we and the DRV (and we assume the Soviets as well) feel would be necessary for the success of at least the early stages of negotiation. Aside from this, a situation in which the North Vietnamese continue their infiltration of men and materials southward while we are engaging in talks would produce the kind of tensions that would make any constructive steps toward a settlement difficult if not impossible.

4. For Saigon: You should explain privately to Do (and Ky if you wish) that we see public statements as designed to put pressure on us and that we have had messages in Cairo and New Delhi along same lines. You should ask for Saigon reaction, while indicating that our position remains as stated by Goldberg.

5. For London: This new series of moves by DRV, and our reactions to it, should be fully in hands of Wilson and Brown before Kosygin visit. We are considering message that would disclose Cairo and New Delhi approaches and cover whole subject in detail, with suggestions on line British might take with Soviets. For time being, you should confine your discussion with British to their interpretation of Burchett interview and Nhan Dan commentary, without at this time going into Cairo and New Delhi.

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

January 31, 1967

STATE 128486 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis
Ref: Moscow's 3218 and 3231

1. Guthrie should ask to see DRV Charge soonest to deliver following written message:

a. The USG has carefully noted the DRV message of January 27 and the accompanying remarks by the DRV Charge. The USG has preserved the strictly confidential nature of these exchanges, but notes that the DRV has broadcast publicly the essence of the January 27 message and asked other governments to inform us that the DRV is prepared to enter negotiations with the USG when bombing of North Viet-Nam stops without stated conditions. The US has felt that it must give some response to third nations conveying messages from the DRV, and will be conveying such responses in the near future. We believe this essential in order to protect the existence of this strictly confidential channel. We assume the DRV will treat third country channels in the same manner, but that strictly confidential statements will continue to be handled through this channel.

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b. The basic objective of the USG remains the holding of direct and private talks covering any elements that either side believes should be considered in reaching a peaceful solution to the Viet-Nam problem. For this purpose, the US would be prepared to include in these discussions the four-point position of the DRV or any other matter the DRV wishes to bring up. The US would welcome DRV comments on the US message of January 20.

c. At the same time, the USG notes the concern of the DRV in discussing "intensification" or "escalation" of the bombing of North Viet-Nam as presented in the January 27 aide-memoire and the oral remarks of the DRV Charge. We are ready to discuss this and related issues. But we remind the DRV that one step has already been taken by the USG to de-escalate the war in the North: for more than a month our planes have been ordered not to bomb within 10 nautical miles of Hanoi city center. We would like to avail ourselves of this direct private channel to inform the DRV that the USG would be prepared to implement additional measures to de-escalate the bombing of the North to create conditions conducive to the success of talks with the DRV. We, of course, would be impressed with similar acts of restraint on the part of the DRV, and we can assure the DRV that any such acts on its part need not be made public. The favorable atmosphere which would result from these mutual steps toward peace would permit the US and DRV to take additional steps toward obtaining a peaceful solution.

d. The USG is aware that the DRV is sensitive to any public link between a stopping of the bombing and reciprocal actions on Hanoi's part. In this connection, it should be observed that the cessation of bombing would lead to a world-wide assumption that talks were under way and it would become increasingly difficult to hold discussions under conditions of secrecy. For this reason, we remind the DRV of the USG suggestion that the stopping of the bombing might take place as a prior and ostensibly unilateral action. Before doing this we would want a private understanding with the DRV that additional subsequent steps would be taken that would amount in the aggregate to an equitable and reciprocal reduction of hostile action. The USG takes this opportunity to renew this suggestion as one to which the DRV may wish to give serious consideration.

e. Finally, the USG notes that the approaching TET period, during which both sides have announced cessations of military action, including the bombing of North Viet-Nam, may make the present occasion particularly appropriate for discussions along the lines suggested above. In view of the nearness of the TET period, the USG hopes that the DRV response to the foregoing will be made as soon as possible.

2. Before handing over the above written message and reading it for translation, Guthrie should note orally that the USG refutes categorically the charges about US actions and intentions concerning South Viet-Nam and the GVN contained in the DRV aide-memoire and oral remarks. However, in the interests of bringing about a constructive exchange of views, the USG will refrain from a point-by-point refutation and proceed to our formal reply to the January 27 aide-memoire.

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3. Either at close, or at appropriate point in conversation, Guthrie should ask when DRV Charge expects new ambassador to arrive FYI: Purpose of this inquiry is to suggest possible early appointment of representative qualified for more frank and direct discussions, if DRV desires. END FYI.

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

February 1, 1967

SAIGON 17053 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Sent 1000, 1 Feb 67; Rec'd 1052, 1 Feb 67.

1. Pursuant to your 128175, I called Ky on Wednesday morning and cited the newspaper articles by Salisbury, Burchett, and in the Communist newspaper Nhan Dan as well as the messages in Cairo and New Delhi, all of them trying to get us to stop the bombing without any deescalation on their side. I asked Ky what he thought.

2. Ky believes that "we are getting stronger every day, and they are getting weaker every day - and they know it." They are hurt by the bombing, and by the tremendous military "meat-grinder" which devours the troops which they send into South Viet-Nam, in particular, he said, "our political progress is the worst thing for them". They know that once a constitutional government is installed in Viet-Nam, he added, they will have no more chance. For that reason, Ky said, he had decided that the elections should be held three months after the promulgation of the constitution and not six months.

.....

5. Their difficulties were three times as great as ours, said Ky. It was important to elect a constitutional president as soon as possible for many reasons, including peace talks. Until there is an elected government in Viet-Nam, it is very important to keep all peace overtures very quiet because news of them will affect the morale of the Vietnamese....

.....

LODGE

STATE 129441 (to Amembassy London), TS/Nodis, Sent 2229, 1 Feb 67
Ref: Your 6167

Chester Cooper will be in London to brief Brown and Wilson on relevant matters prior to the Kosygin visit....

Michael Stewart brought over a message to Cooper from Brown dated 30 January, the text of which follows:

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QTE Kosygin arrives on Monday, 6 February and we will be finalising the briefs at the end of this week. Could you please let me have as soon as possible any additional information on American thinking on Vietnam and in particular on where Thomson has got to in Moscow.

I think the main point we should make with Kosygin is the need of some private sign out of Hanoi during the TET truce, and we will therefore try to raise Vietnam with Kosygin at the earliest possible stage in the talks.

I was interested in a recent report of Burchett's alleged conversation with Pham Van Dong (Pat Dean will show you a copy of the report). Taken at face value this is an indicator that the North Vietnamese may be trying to get a message of some sort across. Even though this communist channel may be suspect, Burchett's statements seem hard enough to warrant examination. What do you think about this? It seems pretty relevant to what we say to Kosygin. UNQTE.

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RUSK (Drafted by C. L. Cooper)

February 2, 1967

MOSCOW 3321 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1515, 2 Feb 67; Rec'd 1624, 2 Feb 67.
Ref: A. State 128486; B. Moscow 3295, para one P.

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3. DCM began by making oral statement per para two ref State tel. Then handed Le Chang written statement.

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9. Before parting, DCM inquired when new DRV ambassador expected to arrive. Le Chang said "in near future."

10. During phone call this noon, Tu asked who would be coming, DCM or Ambassador. Made no further comment when told "DCM" and subject did not arise during meeting.

THOMPSON.

USUN 3848 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 2318, 2 Feb 67, Rec'd 2414, 2 Feb 67.
For President and Secretary from Goldberg.

. . . approaches could represent either:

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(A) A sign of serious interest on Hanoi's part in beginning process toward reaching settlement or toward mutual abatement of the conflict; or

(B) Part of an intensified propaganda effort to increase pressure of world and domestic opinion on US to end bombing.

I consider it essential that, in reacting to these approaches, we follow course which does not exclude either

With these purposes in mind, I wish to urge two additional steps to policy which has been approved for responding to Hanoi's direct approach:

First: while this approach is being explored, and until it is ascertained beyond reasonable doubt that it is not serious move on Hanoi's part, we should undertake no new or additional targeting for our bombing sorties in North Vietnam.

Second: Following the TET cease-fire, we should reduce the bombing of North Vietnam by a small but significant amount, namely: suspend those bombing sorties which are directed against targets not related to North's infiltration of men and supplies into south. As I understand from Secy McNamara's statement to Cabinet on Feb 1, this would involve suspension of approximately five percent of present sorties in North.

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The principal advantages I see to these additional steps on our part are as follows: They offer something of substance to Hanoi immediately and the prospect of something more in future; At same time, . . . : On the one hand, we would be relatively free from charge that we had not responded affirmatively to Hanoi's approaches. Our public record on this score will need bolstering, for it appears the record is being rather badly clouded by Polish version of how our mid-December bombings interfered with what they conceive to be a very promising chance of talks with Hanoi. On other hand, since reduction of bombing would be relatively small and would not involve suspension of sorties directed against targets related to North Vietnamese infiltration, our action would not open us to charge of having placed in jeopardy status and security of our forces in south.

GOLDBERG.

February 3, 1967

STATE 131591 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, Sent 0329, 4 Feb 67.
Ref: Moscow's 3321

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5. In conversation last evening with Kohler, Dobrynin showed considerable interest in the Guthrie-Le Chang contacts. He indicated he had been informed of earlier meetings and that next move was up to us.

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February 4, 1967

On February 4, the SUNFLOWER/PLUS series was established in a message to Thompson in Moscow (State 131705), informing him that consideration was being given to having Guthrie deliver to the DRV Charge at their next meeting a Presidential message to Ho Chi Minh. Thompson's views were requested on the text of an attached draft which he was informed was not cleared in text or principle.

On the following day, Thompson submitted a somewhat negative view on the wisdom of the suggested action, although he did not feel strongly on the matter (Moscow's 3353). He felt (a) the draft letter merely raises the current exercise to a higher level; (b) personally addressing Ho might weaken his in-house position; (c) emphasis on TET might imply desperation on our part; (d) the letter should be held for use if an impasse is reached; and (e) if the letter is to be used, some textual revision would be in order.

STATE 131714 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, Sent 2312, 4 Feb 67.

You should inform DRV rep that Estabrook story came from Polish sources.

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RUSK (Drafted by L. Unger)

LONDON 6271 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Rec'd 0544, 5 Feb 67.

For the Secretary and Harriman from Cooper

1. With Ambassador Bruce met with Foreign Secretary

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3. With respect to the forthcoming Kosygin visit, I reminded Brown of the Rusk-Gromyko conversation many weeks ago, and noted that we have not yet gotten a reply to the Secretary's query as to what the Russians would do if there were a bombing cessation. . . . I suggested to Brown that if the opportunity permitted, the British should press the Russians on both their short-run opportunities and responsibilities to insure Hanoi against Chinese economic, political, or even military actions in the event Hanoi moved toward negotiations. In the longer term the Russians had an opportunity (and indeed they seemed to recognize this themselves) to pursue policies in Asia which would be in tandem with our own and which would be of common benefit in reducing tensions in that part of the world.

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6. I told Brown that the President and the Secretary were cognizant of the British desire to avoid a resumption of bombing while Kosygin was still here. I said that I could not give any unequivocal assurances on this, that much would depend on the behavior of the North Vietnamese during the four-day cessation. Obviously, if there were major North Vietnamese troops movements southward, we had primary responsibility to protect our own forces,

. . . .

8. Brown is very concerned about the low-level of the group that Kosygin is bringing with him. Indeed he is worried in the light of this whether the Russians are ready to engage in serious talks on any subject. Although he was aware of Smirnovsky's statement that the Russians were interested in a peace settlement he had not studied it (later Wilson confessed that he had not heard of it.)

. . . .

10. We had fifteen minutes alone with Brown and Wilson. I then told them of our direct contact with the North Vietnamese. I pointed out that it was at a low level, that it was still very fragile, but that we were doing everything we could to keep it going. I stressed that thus far this private exchange had revealed a less forthcoming position on the point of Hanoi than some people read into the various public statements that have been coming out of North Vietnam recently. I stressed that I could not tell them where the contact was going on, that we were unaware of the extent to which the Soviets knew about it, and that we hoped that neither Brown nor Wilson would make any reference to this in their conversations with Kosygin. I showed Wilson the seven substantive points contained in our January 20 message and indicated that if the Russians raised any of these we would be perfectly prepared to see the British discuss them.

BRUCE

LONDON 6272 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Rec'd 0549, 5 Feb 67.

For the Secretary and Harriman from Cooper

1. I have met with Murray at the Foreign Office to go over working on the brief for Brown and Wilson. The brief stresses the need for some meaningful action the President can point to in exchange for a bombing cessation. It remind the Russians that we are conscious of Hanoi's problems about making a public commitment and our readiness to get private assurances.

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BRUCE.

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February 5, 1967

"Ashmore's Letter to Hanoi Chief," The Washington Post, 18 September 1967
(Letter mailed Feb 5 by Ashmore)

Following is the text of the letter by Harry S. Ashmore to President Ho Chi Minh:

Dear Mr. President:

Mr. William Baggs and I have made a full report to appropriate officials of the United States Government on our recent conversation with you in Hanoi. Ambassador Luis Quintanilla has communicated his views to the U.S. Ambassador in Mexico City.

The State Department has expressed itself as most grateful for your thoughtful approach to the possibility of an ultimate settlement of the hostilities between the United States and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

In our several discussions with senior officials of the State Department they took occasion to reiterate points we believe are already known to you. They emphasized that the U.S. remains prepared for secret discussions at any time, without conditions, and that such discussions might cover the whole range of topics relevant to a peaceful settlement. They reiterated that the Geneva Accords might be the framework for a peaceful solution.

They expressed particular interest in your suggestion to us that private talks could begin provided the U.S. stopped bombing your country, and ceased introducing additional U.S. troops into Vietnam. They expressed the opinion that some reciprocal restraint to indicate that neither side intended to use the occasion of the talks for military advantage would provide tangible evidence of the good faith of all parties in the prospects for a negotiated settlement.

In the light of these concerns, they expressed great interest in any clarification of this point that you might wish to provide through a communication to us.

Speaking now wholly for ourselves, we believe the essential condition for productive talks is an arrangement under which neither side stands to gain military advantage during the period of negotiation. To achieve this end it may be that preliminary secret discussions would be helpful to determine the outline of a possible peaceful settlement.

As we see it, these are practical considerations that have nothing to do with questions of "face." There is no doubt in our minds that the American Government genuinely seeks peace. As private citizens, our sole concern is in facilitating a discussion that will bring all matters at issue to official consideration. It is in this sense that we convey these comments, and invite any reply you may wish to make, which of course we would report to our Government in complete discretion.

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May I take this occasion to renew our thanks for the courteous and considerate treatment we received in Hanoi throughout our visit and for the honor of our most useful conversation with you.

If you feel that further personal conversation with Mr. Baggs and me is in order we would, of course, return to Hanoi at your convenience.

HARRY S. ASHMORE.

February 6, 1967

MOSCOW 3375 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1500, 6 Feb 67, Rec'd 1609, 6 Feb 67.

Ref: State 131591

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5. , DCM then referred to Estabrook Feb 5 Wash Post story of which he gave Le Chang brief oral summary based on STATE 131700. Said he mentioned story because he instructed tell Le Chang that story had come from Polish sources and that U.S. Govt will maintain complete silence and avoid comment on it.

6. Noting that both sides had been concerned to maintain their contact confidential and secret (Le Chang expressed full agreement with this), DCM said we concerned about certain aspects of this: (A) Soviets would know about his visits to DRV Embassy, e.g., his driver Soviet; and (B) It always possible Western correspondents might see him enter or leave DRV Embassy and ask him what he doing here. If (B) should occur, he could not deny his visit, and problem would be how to respond to questions. One possibility would be to confirm that contact had been established and refuse further comment. If we kept quiet, there might be implication that we discussing POWs. DCM said all this led him to ask if we should arrange another meeting place. Should we ask Soviets to provide us a less conspicuous place?

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7. Re place of meeting, Le Chang emphatically stated his view was that we should not rpt not ask any third party to arrange for a change of venue, because of principle of confidentiality and secrecy he had mentioned. Also said he wanted reiterate that time or content of meetings should not rpt not be mentioned to anybody, including correspondents. As to how any possible press query should be answered, said he was sure that if this principle were abided by, many ways of responding could be found. In response DCM's comment correspondents would indulge in guessing, Le Chang said if they wanted to guess they could do so.

THOMPSON.

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LONDON 6315 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 2100, 6 Feb 67; Rec'd 2215, 6 Feb 67.

To Secretary from Cooper

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2. PM had an hour or more private session with Kosygin. Kosygin embarked immediately on discussion of China and Vietnam. According to Wilson Kosygin "seemed obsessed" with China situation. Talked about Chinese "the way Pakistanis talk about Indians" Kosygin said Chinese situation not likely to have immediate effect on North Vietnam but would have eventual influence. Kosygin worried about possibility of Chinese intervention especially if they "go beserk". The US was "helping to push Hanoi into the hands of Chinese". Stated that thousands of Chinese military in civilian clothes already in NVN. Kosygin admitted there were some differences within Hanoi regime but became evasive when pressed for details. He spoke "very warmly" of Ho and FonMin but Wilson thought was lukewarm re Pham Van Dong.

Kosygin agreed that need to make some progress toward peace during TET "very urgent". Agreed that both USSR and UK could be "of assistance" in getting talks between "the principals" started. . . .

. . . , Wilson spelled out in detail the Phase A - Phase B formula, but got no flicker of interest

Kosygin quoted from (and subsequently referred to) Burchett interview as key to NVN readiness to negotiate. Kosygin evidenced mood of "great urgency" in plenary discussion. Referred again to TET as being "the big chance". Repeated on several occasions the point that "we can assist, but we (i.e. the USSR and the UK) cannot negotiate. The best way to do this is to get the US and the NVN together".

When Wilson asked Kosygin whether he could induce Hanoi to make unequivocal statement that they would enter negotiations if bombing stopped, Kosygin "squirmed" and said he and the UK would have to rely on the Foreign Minister's statement as contained in the Burchett interview. In his summary remarks he said (direct quote from interpreters notes) "our NVN friend do not rule out a negotiated solution".

The only Soviet suggestion for US-Sov action was that Kosygin and Wilson jointly endorse the NVN position as contained in Burchett interview in a private message to the President or publicly in the communique. This is "unacceptable" to the British. But British feel this is Kosygin's opening gambit and a more constructive position can be worked out.

Kosygin did not rise to Wilson suggestion re some jointly worked out arrangement to move private US-NVN agreements to an international arrangement. This could be worked on in due course. Important thing, according to Kosygin was that there should not be another Geneva conf "because of the Chinese."

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When Wilson was asked what suggestions UK had for immediate future, Wilson stressed need for Hanoi to "avoid provocation during TET" to which Brown added, "such as movement of troops through the DMZ". This was only point at which, according to Wilson, situation "got hairy." Kosygin made much of US troop and ship movements.

BRUCE.

LONDON 6316 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 0122, 7 Feb 67; Rec'd 0148, 7 Feb 67.

To Secretary from Cooper

1. Kosygin wanted Wilson to use "hot line" to President to tell President that, if bombing stopped, Hanoi would talk. Wilson refused, countering that all he had to go on was Kosygin's claim that NVN FonMin was telling Burchett straight story. Kosygin then said he could go well beyond this. He (Kosygin) had been in direct contact with Hanoi since afternoon session, Hanoi confirmed readiness to talk. (I suggested a technical check on Kosygin's contact.)

2. Kosygin then said that Wilson should send personal telegram to President. Wilson asked Kosygin if Kosygin would send a joint telegram which said: "NVN FonMin says he will negotiate in exchange for bombing cessation. I (Wilson) don't know this man, but Kosygin does and will underwrite him." Kosygin said that he would table his own draft at next session (4 PM Tues).

3. Wilson asked if Washington could provide alternative draft for him to table - a draft acceptable to Washington and one that Sovs would hopefully sign on to. Wilson (and more particularly Brown) also feel urgent need to get "minimum reciprocal act" which US can accept. (We went through standard list re infiltration, trucks, etc.) I need whatever Wash can provide by 1300 London time.

4. Wilson told me privately Kosygin said US was "in contact" with Hanoi.

5. Just got a call from Pallisep to say Wilson making personal call to President.

BRUCE

February 7, 1967

On February 7, Thompson was instructed to arrange delivery at once to the DRV Charge of a letter from the President to Ho Chi Minh (State's 132608).

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LONDON 6321 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1125, 7 Feb; Rec'd 1159 7 Feb.

For the Secretary and Harriman from Cooper

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2. I received the President's message to Wilson, and read substantial portions of it to Brown. Brown felt this would starch up Wilson and strengthen his hand in the afternoon's discussions.

3. We then went on to discuss the US-USSR communique. We explored a statement along these lines: A. Both sides (The British and the Soviets) agree that a settlement of the Vietnam war must be worked out as early as possible. B. Both sides agree to do whatever they can jointly and individually to assist such a settlement to come about. C. Both sides recognize that successful negotiations cannot take place unless bombing has stopped and mutual steps are taken toward further de-escalation (Phase A-Phase B). D. Both sides agree that they will maintain continual contact and discussion in connection with the Vietnam issue.

4. Brown thinks that he can get Wilson on board on this and that there is a good possibility that the Russians would buy something along these lines.

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BRUCE

STATE 132481 (to Amembassy London), TS/Nodis, Sent 1919, 7 Feb 67

Literally Eyes Only for Ambassador and Cooper

Following message has been sent to Prime Minister from the President via White House channels:

"For the Prime Minister from the President.

"I am sending these thoughts to you on the question posed as to whether the U.S. could stop the bombing of North Viet Nam in exchange for an indication that Hanoi would enter into talks without any military acts of de-escalation on their side.

"It is important to recall that the Poles said to us in the first part of December that Hanoi would be prepared to hold discussions with us on the basis of a Polish summary of what the Poles understood our position to be. Discussion of mutual de-escalation, including a cessation of the bombing, would be a part of those talks. We promptly agreed to such talks but found that Hanoi (so the Poles told us) was unwilling to proceed with such talks because of certain bombing actions which occurred on 13-14

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December. Although we had seen no real move toward talks before that date, we nevertheless removed that obstacle (if that was the obstacle) by informing Hanoi that we were refraining from bombing within a radius of 10 nautical miles of the center of Hanoi -- restrictions which have been in effect for more than a month. We took this action without conditions but did state that we would be impressed by any corresponding action by Hanoi. This was an important military move on our part. We have seen neither a corresponding military step on their side nor a use of existing channels to get on with discussions. In contacts with Hanoi since December 23 Hanoi has received messages from us but we have not had any replies from Hanoi on any points of substance. Indeed, the Burchett interview represents a step backward from Hanoi's position in December if the Poles were accurately reporting to us.

"We have recently informed Hanoi directly that we would be prepared to take additional military measures of de-escalation similar to the limitation of bombing within the Hanoi perimeter, on similar terms. We have had no reply to that suggestion.

"We are ready and willing to hold discussions with Hanoi through any feasible process -- publicly or privately, directly or indirectly. We are inclined to the view that better progress could be made if such talks were private and direct.

"If we are asked to take military action on our side, we need to know what the military consequences will be, that is, what military action will be taken by the other side. We have noted that a suspension of the bombing has been termed by the other side as unacceptable and that we must accept an unconditional and permanent cessation of bombing. That makes it all the more necessary to know what military action Hanoi would take if we in fact stopped the bombing.

"We are prepared to take up with Hanoi steps of mutual de-escalation and are prepared to have the most private preliminary conversations with them on arrangements for serious discussions of a final settlement.

"Specifically, we are prepared to and plan, through established channels, to inform Hanoi that if they will agree to an assured stoppage of infiltration into South Viet Nam, we will stop the bombing of North Viet Nam and stop further augmentation of U.S. forces in South Viet Nam. We would welcome your joint advocacy of this position.

"Further, or alternatively, you should know we would recommend to the South Vietnamese military authorities that they discuss with North Vietnamese military authorities a prolongation of the Tet ceasefire.

"For your own information, you should be aware of by feeling that, in all of our various contacts with Hanoi, we have had no impression from them as to the substance of the issues which must be resolved as a part of a peaceful settlement. They have received repeated statements from us about our views. They have reiterated their four points and the

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Liberation Front's five points with varying degree of vagueness as to their status, but they have not replied to our suggestions for a revision of point three of their four points or a readiness to hold preliminary discussions looking toward agreed points as a basis for negotiations.

"In sum, I would suggest that you try to separate the political processes of discussion from military action. We will participate fully in any political process including discussions of de-escalation. We are prepared to move immediately on major steps of mutual de-escalation, as indicated above. What we cannot accept is the exchange of guarantee of a safe haven for North Viet Nam merely for discussions which thus far have no form or content, during which they could continue to expand their military operations without limit.

"I doubt very much that Kosygin expected to resolve this matter on his first evening in London and it would be helpful if you could fully explore just what Kosygin is willing or able to do. If he has counter-proposals to my major suggestion of mutual military de-escalation, we will give them immediate attention.

"If Kosygin is seriously worried about China, as he told you he was, we would hope that he would exert himself to help bring peace to Viet Nam and allow North Viet Nam to participate in the peaceful development of Southeast Asia.

"Finally, I would strongly urge that the two co-chairmen not suggest a stoppage of the bombing in exchange merely for talks, but, instead, appeal to Hanoi to consider seriously the reasonable proposals we are putting before them, which would take us not merely into negotiation but a long step towards peace itself."

RUSK.

(Text received from White House).

LONDON 6360 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 2020, 7 Feb; Rec'd 2105, 7 Feb.

For the Secretary and Harriman from Cooper

2. . . . , Kosygin did not table a draft message to the President as he said he would do. Rather, he gave a pro-forma restatement of his earlier position on importance of the Vietnamese statements to Burchett.

3. Wilson read from his prepared briefing notes. The exposition of the Phase A - Phase B formula was changed from the version contained in my para 5 London 6329. It was felt that it would be worth spelling this out

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in the simplest possible terms. The final text follows:

"Extract from statement by British Prime Minister at meeting with Mr. Kosygin on Feb. 7, 1967.

" I am now satisfied that the Americans would now be prepared to move to further actions to strengthen mutual confidence if they were able to secure some assurance that this move would be reciprocated by the other side. For instance, I believe that they are now seeking to get word to Hanoi in the following lines. They recognize the need for a first and visible step. They further recognize that this step must mean the cessation of the bombing. This I believe they would do, and they recognize that it must be presented as being done unconditionally. Therefore we have to use our ingenuity to divorce in presentation the stopping of the bombing from the consequential actions. Yet you and I know that the consequential actions are essential if we are to get the bombing stopped.

"The consequential actions are as follows. The United States are willing to stop the build-up of their forces in the South if they are assured that the movement of North Vietnamese forces from the North to the South will stop at the same time. Essentially therefore the two stages are kept apart. But because the United States government know that the second stages will follow, they will therefore be able first to stop the bombing, even if there is a short period between the first stage and the actions to be taken by both sides in the second stage. There would be balanced concessions in the second stage; the first stage would be carried out by the United States alone; but the United States would only carry out the first stage because they would know that the second stage would follow within a short period of time.

"The entry of American reinforcements to Vietnam can be easily observed. Therefore there could be no doubt on the part of the North Vietnamese that the Americans were keeping their part of the bargain.

"The North Vietnamese action in the second stage would be seen as in response to the United States action in the second stage but it would be the result of a prior secret assurance."

4. Kosygin showed considerable interest in this formulation. He evidently had not understood it when Brown presented it to him last November. He asked Wilson to repeat it and then asked Wilson to deliver the text to him in writing this evening. This has been done. The British are virtually certain that Kosygin is going to transmit this to Hanoi. They hope that on Thursday afternoon when talks resume Kosygin will have a reply from Hanoi.

. . . .

BRUCE

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February 8, 1967

His Excellency
Ho Chi Minh
President
Democratic Republic of Vietnam

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to you in the hope that the conflict in Vietnam can be brought to an end. That conflict has already taken a heavy toll--in lives lost, in wounds inflicted, in property destroyed, and in simple human misery. If we fail to find a just and peaceful solution, history will judge us harshly.

Therefore, I believe that we both have a heavy obligation to seek earnestly the path to peace. It is in response to that obligation that I am writing directly to you.

We have tried over the past several years, in a variety of ways and through a number of channels, to convey to you and your colleagues our desire to achieve a peaceful settlement. For whatever reasons, these efforts have not achieved any results.

It may be that our thoughts and yours, our attitudes and yours, have been distorted or misinterpreted as they passed through these various channels. Certainly that is always a danger in indirect communication.

There is one good way to overcome this problem and to move forward in the search for a peaceful settlement. That is for us to arrange for direct talks between trusted representatives in a secure setting and away from the glare of publicity. Such talks should not be used as a propaganda exercise but should be a serious effort to find a workable and mutually acceptable solution.

In the past two weeks, I have noted public statements by representatives of your government suggesting that you would be prepared to enter into direct bilateral talks with representatives of the US Government, provided that we ceased "unconditionally" and permanently our bombing operations against your country and all military actions against it. In the last day, serious and responsible parties have assured us indirectly that this is in fact your proposal.

Let me frankly state that I see two great difficulties with this proposal. In view of your public position, such action on our part would inevitably produce worldwide speculation that discussions were under way and would impair the privacy and secrecy of those discussions. Secondly, there would inevitably be grave concern on our part whether your government would make use of such action by us to improve its military position.

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With these problems in mind, I am prepared to move even further towards an ending of hostilities than your Government has proposed in either public statements or through private diplomatic channels. I am prepared to order a cessation of bombing against your country and the stopping of further augmentation of US forces in South Viet-Nam as soon as I am assured that infiltration into South Viet-Nam by land and by sea has stopped. These acts of restraint on both sides would, I believe, make it possible for us to conduct serious and private discussions leading toward an early peace.

I make this proposal to you now with a specific sense of urgency arising from the imminent New Year holidays in Viet-Nam. If you are able to accept this proposal I see no reason why it could not take effect at the end of the New Year, or Tet, holidays. The proposal I have made would be greatly strengthened if your military authorities and those of the Government of South Viet-Nam could promptly negotiate an extension of the Tet truce.

As to the site of the bilateral discussions I propose, there are several possibilities. We could, for example, have our representatives meet in Moscow where contacts have already occurred. They could meet in some other country such as Burma. You may have other arrangements or sites in mind, and I would try to meet your suggestions.

The important thing is to end a conflict that has brought burdens to both our peoples, and above all to the people of South Viet-Nam. If you have any thoughts about the actions I propose, it would be most important that I receive them as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Lyndon B. Johnson

On February 8, Cooper had separate meetings with Brown and Wilson, the results of which indicated that Wilson would hew to our line on bombing cessation (London's 6321-6329). In addition, the framework of a final communique was discussed. Further guidance on this subject was provided in State's 132521 with particular emphasis on the British not signing anything which calls for unilateral action by us.

On the same day, Wilson responded to a parliamentary question on the MARIGOLD subject by stating he had "all the details" on the December meetings which had been aborted by a "mutual understanding".

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Late that evening (Feb. 8) Ben Read telephoned Cooper and advised him that (1) we could not draw conclusions from the single sentence on

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Geneva in Kosygin's Guildhall address; (2) we would wish Wilson to probe Kosygin at the next morning's meeting; and (3) if the Soviets are serious on this issue, we would give urgent consideration to Brown's suggestion or any variant thereof.

MOSCOW 3412 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1030, 8 Feb; Rec'd 1347, 8 Feb.
Ref: Moscow 3404

. . . .

2. . . . , Le Chang . . . wished say that he could transmit message today.

3. DCM said would report Le Chang's remarks to his Govt, and also expressed pleasure at fact President's message would be transmitted today.

. . . .

THOMPSON.

London BBC Domestic Television Service in English 1510Z 8 Feb 67

(Kosygin speech at Lord Mayor's luncheon at the Guildhall in London on 8 February)

. . . .

Today the major factors of international tension are the Vietnamese events and it is the US aggression which is the real, and in effect the only, cause for the war in Vietnam. We may say that the United States was sowing the seeds of that war as far back as in 1954 when, in contrast to the Soviet Union, Britain, and several other countries, it attempted to prevent the restoration of peace in Indochina, and in the following years when it prevented universal Democratic elections as provided for by the Geneva agreements. Even then the United States began dictatorially to set up and replace, one after the other, the governments in Saigon.

. . . .

. . . . The United Kingdom is a state whose voice is heeded by many and it is precisely for this reason that the Soviet government believes that today, as in 1954, Great Britain together with the Soviet Union and other nations could make its contribution to the settlement of the Vietnam issue on the basis of the Geneva agreement, which must be implemented by the United States.

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The first step in this direction should be the unconditional termination of the U.S. bombing and of all other acts of aggression against the DRV, as was recently stated by the DRV Foreign Minister. This step is essential for talks to be held between the DRV and the United States. . . .

. . . .

LONDON 6399 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 0241, 9 Feb; Rec'd 0313, 9 Feb.

For Secretary from Cooper.

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2. Brown . . . impressed with Kosygin statement in Guildhall speech today that "--- the Soviet Govt considers now as in 1954, Great Britain jointly with Soviet Union and other countries, could make her contribution to the settlement of the VN question on the basis of the Geneva agreements which must be observed by USA."

3. Brown feels Sovs may be signalling a readiness to convene Geneva. . . . Brown asked for draft written proposal. . . .

4. Gore Booth Murray and I went back to FonOff and prepared following (which they understand very clearly that this does not have any official endorsement of USG despite my participation in drafting):

QUOTE: The two co-chairmen will announce immediately that they:

A. Invite the US to assure them that the bombing of NVN will stop;

B. Invite the North Vietnamese and the US to assure the co-chairmen that they will take mutual and equivalent steps to halt the augmentation of their forces in SVN.

C. If all the foregoing assurances are promptly received the two co-chairmen will invite the members of the 1954 Geneva conference to reconvene in Geneva on 15 Feb to work out a settlement of the present conflict. UNQUOTE.

5. If Sovs will not buy this, Brown will press them to endorse Phase A - Phase B formula as they formulated it yesterday.

BRUCE

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February 9, 1967

LONDON 6406 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1222, 9 Feb; Rec'd 1258, 9 Feb.

For Secretary and Harriman from Cooper

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3. Wilson and Brown (and also some old FonOff hands) are impressed with these aspects of conversations held thus far:

A. Kosygin's "obsession" with China and readiness to discuss this subject without apparent inhibition.

B. Probably because of China, Kosygin's sense of urgency to move ahead on some formula (thus far, his own) for joint UK-Sov approach "to assist getting the US and DRV, "the two principals", to settle the war.

C. Kosygin's statements that he is in direct touch with Hanoi and his stated readiness to refer important new issues and approaches directly to Hanoi for consideration, e.g. the British version of Phase A-Phase B.

D. The low key, non-polemical tone of the talks on all issues (Gore-Booth said last night that talks on bilateral issues are moving smoothly and "not badly").

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10. . . . I have gotten a call from the FonOff to the effect that Kosygin's answer to query re significance his statement on Geneva was sufficiently forthcoming to have warranted Wilson commitment to provide Kosygin a proposition in writing "later in the day" about calling Geneva Conf presumably along lines of three part Draft I forwarded to Wash early this morning

BRUCE

LONDON 6411 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1439, 9 Feb; Rec'd 1523, 9 Feb.
Ref: 6406

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3. Brown then asked Kosygin whether his remarks about Geneva in his speech yesterday indicated the Russians were ready to reconvene the Geneva Conference, even if the Chinese refused to attend. Kosygin replied this was "not exactly" what he meant to imply. Kosygin, according to Murray's notes, said that in his speech yesterday "I proceeded upon the assumption that the main thing was for the UK and the

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Sov Union to assist the two sides to meet together after the bombing stopped. After this has been done there may be various proposals for moving further. The Geneva Conf could be convened even without China. We need not insist on Chinese participation." (Kosygin then made several uncomplimentary references to the way the Chinese felt about diplomatic procedures and forms.) Kosygin then went on to say that he "could not speak for Hanoi on this point". He emphasized that it was important to "do first things first. If we try to work out the tactics too early we might jeopardize everything. . . . We might raise other problems such as China and Laos (according to Murray this is the first time Laos has been mentioned in any of the conversations)."

. . . .

5. Brown then said that no bombing would be going on during TET. In light of this "thinking out loud," suppose the US should agree not to resume bombing, and both sides agreed to take mutual and equivalent steps would Kosygin then agree to call a Geneva Conf on 15 Feb?

6. Kosygin said that he would first want to know Hanoi's views before he committed himself. He reminded Brown that a Geneva Conf would be "a complicated issue"; China will create difficulties and "there are Chinese troops in North Vietnam". There is also a pro-Chinese faction in Hanoi that would have to be dealt with. Kosygin then asked "has this been discussed with the Americans?" Brown said that if Kosygin could deliver his friends in Hanoi the British would try to "deliver the Americans."

7. Kosygin responded "I could send this to Hanoi, but I am concerned about the difficulties." He said he would like to "think it over," and asked if he could have the proposition in writing as early as possible today. Brown said he would do his best to get this to Kosygin later in the afternoon.

8. The next meeting will be at 1030 tomorrow morning. At this session the British plan to point out that they have now delivered two solid propositions to the Russians and presumably Hanoi. One of these provides for a private series of negotiations, the other a public one, both involve mutual and equivalent steps of de-escalation. If Hanoi is serious about wanting to stop the war, the Russians have an obligation to provide Hanoi's reactions, and this should be done on an urgent basis.

BRUCE

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STATE 133907 (to Amembassy London), TS/Nodis, Sent 1845, 9 Feb 67.

. . . .

2. As we believe we have made clear to you, we have major doubts whether, if Hanoi in fact accepts the deal we have proposed, they will ask to have it nailed down in public through any announcement, and might have additional misgivings about the Soviets doing so in the light of whatever degree of concern they still have about Chicom reactions. We would suppose the latter factor would also operate strongly on the Soviets, since any public announcement would carry the unmistakable flavor that the Soviets had colluded with the US, through the UK, to put this deal across British should be left in no doubt that, while we are most grateful for their serious considered efforts, they may well have to accept results rather than overt British participation in them.

3. With this evaluation in mind, we have reviewed text in para 4 of London 6399 and note that, like the British oral formula (London 6329, para 5), it speaks only of DRV stopping "augmentation of forces" in South Vietnam. This would leave way open for DRV to continue to send equipment without restrictions and also to send forces in the guise of rotation. Moreover, there would be no restraint whatsoever on political cadre and others who could be described as not technically uniformed "forces." In light of these objections, any specific formula along these lines which the British might put forward would have to be amended along following lines:

QTE. The two cochairmen will announce immediately that they:

a. Invite the US to assure them that the bombing of North Vietnam will stop;

b. Invite the North Vietnamese to assure the cochairmen that infiltration into South Vietnam will stop, and invite the US to assure the cochairmen that it will stop further augmentation of US forces in South Vietnam. (FYI: These are the operative parts both of our own message to the British (State 132481) and of our message to Hanoi. End FYI).

c. If all the foregoing assurances are promptly received, the two cochairmen will invite members of the 1954 Geneva Conference to reconvene in Geneva on 15 February to work out a settlement of the present conflict. END QTE

. . . .

5. Seeing as we do these possibly serious difficulties with a precise formulation of the deal -- and doubting, as we do, that Hanoi will wish a really specific public announcement -- you should tell British that we ourselves would be much more inclined to have them table the more general Phase A/Phase B formula.

. . . .

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LONDON 6429 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 2200, 9 Feb; Rec'd 2225, 9 Feb.
Ref: State 133907

1. Met with Murray FonOff and dictated points A, B, and C para 3 which then transcribed verbatim as British proposal. This sent to Brown at Buckingham Palace dinner for handing over to Kosygin.

2. Also passed on, orally, to Murray our preference for their Phase A - Phase B formula and he in complete agreement.

.

BRUCE

STATE 134409 (to Amembassy Saigon & London), TS/Nodis, Sent 2427, 9 Feb.

Saigon for Ambassador/London for Ambassador and Cooper

1. Following is DoD summary of developments surrounding Tet truces, on which you should take actions indicated in succeeding paragraphs:

a. North Vietnamese water-borne traffic along coast of North Vietnam between 19 degrees north latitude and the DMZ (17 degrees north latitude) totaled over 900 vessels of various types during the first 30 hours of the Tet truce which, : is more than double the logistic resupply traffic during the Christmas 48-hour truce. . . .

b. The situation described above obviously creates a hazard to our forces which we cannot overlook. Moreover, it illustrates graphically why the USG cannot cease bombing operations against North Vietnam in exchange for a promise to talk rather than a substantial military curtailment on their part.

c. . . . : Our intelligence sources reveal that the North Vietnamese have been moving during the past two weeks an additional division from central North Vietnam southward, presumably to reinforce the two North Vietnamese divisions which are already within or just north of the DMZ. Additionally, our intelligence gives some reason to believe that the North Vietnamese units in and near the DMZ are on the alert and positioned for renewal of combat operations and infiltration, possibly soon after the Tet truce expires. The substantial resupply efforts of the North Vietnamese support this evaluation.

2. Saigon should coordinate with MACV to make public material in para la above. . . .

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3. Ambassador Bruce and Cooper should bring this story to the attention of highest British levels In so doing, you should not repeat not suggest that we are not still wide open to the idea of continuing the Tet bombing suspension through the 7-day period or at least until Kosygin departs London. You should emphasize, however, that we are seriously concerned about these developments and that final decision on such additional two- or three-day suspension does involve serious factors in light of this information.

4. Wireless file is carrying full account of Secretary's press conference today, at which he made more general statement about supply activity and rate of incidents.

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

Department of State, Public Information Bulletin, February 13, 1967.

FOURTEEN POINTS FOR PEACE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

"Secretary Rusk on January 27* approved the release of the following elaboration of the Fourteen Points for Peace in Southeast Asia, which were previously made public by the Department of State on January 7, 1966.

1. The Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962 are an adequate basis for peace in Southeast Asia.

2. We would welcome a conference on Southeast Asia or any part thereof:

-- We are ready to negotiate a settlement based on a strict observance of the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Agreements, which observance was called for in the declaration on Viet-Nam of the meeting of the Warsaw Pact countries in Bucharest on July 6, 1966. And we will support a reconvening of the Geneva Conference, or an Asian conference, or any other generally acceptable forum.

3. We would welcome "negotiations without preconditions" as called for by 17 nonaligned nations in an appeal delivered to Secretary Rusk on April 1, 1965.

4. We would welcome "unconditional discussions" as called for by President Johnson on April 7, 1965:

-- If the other side will not come to a conference, we are prepared to engage in direct discussions or discussions through an intermediary.

* At his February 9 Press Conference, Secretary Rusk drew attention to the revised 14 points, saying, "I am today making available points we made last year under 14 different headings--annotated to reflect developments in 1966." For this study, therefore, the effective release date is taken as February 9.

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5. A cessation of hostilities could be the first order of business at a conference or could be the subject of preliminary discussions:

-- We have attempted, many times, to engage the other side in a discussion of a mutual deescalation of the level of violence, and we remain prepared to engage in such a mutual deescalation.

-- We stand ready to cooperate fully in getting discussions which could lead to a cessation of hostilities started promptly and brought to a successful completion.

6. Hanoi's four points could be discussed along with other points which others may wish to propose:

-- We would be prepared to accept preliminary discussions to reach agreement on a set of points as a basis for negotiations.

7. We want no U.S. bases in Southeast Asia:

-- We are prepared to assist in the conversion of these bases for peaceful uses that will benefit the peoples of the entire area.

8. We do not desire to retain U.S. troops in South Viet-Nam after peace is assured:

-- We seek no permanent military bases, no permanent establishment of troops, no permanent alliances, no permanent American "presence" of any kind in South Viet-Nam.

-- We have pledged in the Manila Communique that "Allied forces are in the Republic of Vietnam because that country is the object of aggression and its government requested support in the resistance of its people to aggression. They shall be withdrawn, after close consultation, as the other side withdraws its forces to the North, ceases infiltration, and the level of violence thus subsides. Those forces will be withdrawn as soon as possible and not later than six months after the above conditions have been fulfilled."

9. We support free elections in South Viet-Nam to give the South Vietnamese a government of their own choice.

-- We support the development of broadly based democratic institutions in South Viet-Nam.

-- We do not seek to exclude any segment of the South Vietnamese people from peaceful participation in their country's future.

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10. The question of reunification of Viet-Nam should be determined by the Vietnamese through their own free decision:

- It should not be decided by the use of force.
- We are fully prepared to support the decision of the Vietnamese people.

11. The countries of Southeast Asia can be nonaligned or neutral if that be their option:

- We do not seek to impose a policy of alinement on South Viet-Nam.
- We support the neutrality policy of the Royal Government of Laos, and we support the neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia.

12. We would much prefer to use our resources for the economic reconstruction of Southeast Asia than in war. If there is peace, North Viet-Nam could participate in a regional effort to which we would be prepared to contribute at least one billion dollars:

- We support the growing effort by the nations of the area to cooperate in the achievement of their economic and social goals.

13. The President has said "The Viet Cong would have no difficulty in being represented and having their views presented if Hanoi for a moment decides she wants to cease aggression. And I would not think that would be an insurmountable problem at all."

14. We have said publicly and privately that we could stop the bombing of North Viet-Nam as a step toward peace although there has not been the slightest hint or suggestion from the other side as to what they would do if the bombing stopped:

- We are prepared to order a cessation of all bombing of North Viet-Nam, the moment we are assured -- privately or otherwise -- that this step will be answered promptly by a corresponding and appropriate deescalation of the other side.
- We do not seek the unconditional surrender of North Viet-Nam; what we do seek is to assure for the people of South Viet-Nam the right to decide their own political destiny, free of force.

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February 10, 1967

New York Times, 12 February 1967

Text of Goldberg's Howard University Speech

Special to The New York Times

Washington, Feb. 10 - Following are excerpts from the text of an address on "America's Peace Aims in Vietnam" delivered today at Howard University by Arthur J. Goldberg, chief United States representative at the United Nations:

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. The United States remains prepared to take the first step and order a cessation of all bombing of North Vietnam the moment we are assured, privately or otherwise, that this step will be answered promptly by a tangible response toward peace from North Vietnam.

Some analysts contend that our terms of settlement should be more precisely defined. But it is very difficult to be more precise in advance of negotiation, and particularly in light of the substantive ambiguities on the other side. But whatever questions may be raised, they should and can best be resolved in discussions between the parties who have the power to resolve them. For our part, we stand ready to negotiate in good faith unconditionally to resolve all outstanding questions.

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SAIGON 17769 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 0720, 10 Feb; Rec'd 0826, 10 Feb.
Ref: State 133834

1. I believe it is necessary and prudent to inform Ky of message to Hanoi as soon as possible.

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3. I will find it more difficult to explain the new element introduced by our willingness to stop augmentation Information giving rationale re stopping augmentation would be most useful.

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7. Do you wish me to inform General Westmoreland at the time Ky is told?

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LODGE.

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STATE 135513 (to Amembassy Saigon), TS/Nodis
Ref: State 133834; Saigon 17769

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2. We have provided British with text of proposal. They had already outlined a variation of it orally to Kosygin, who expressed interest today and asked for written text to forward at once to Hanoi. This has been provided and reads as below. You may convey to Ky orally as much of digest of proposal as you deem wise in view of great necessity for secrecy.

QTE A. The United States will order a cessation of bombing of North Vietnam as soon as they are assured that infiltration from North Vietnam to South Vietnam has stopped. This assurance can be communicated in secret if North Vietnam so wishes.

B. Within a few days (with a period to be agreed with the two sides before the bombing stops) the United States will stop further augmenting their force in South Vietnam. The cessation of bombing of North Vietnam is an action which will be immediately apparent. This requires that the stoppage of infiltration become public very quickly thereafter. If Hanoi is unwilling to announce the stoppage of infiltration, the United States must do so at the time it stops augmentation of US forces. In that case, Hanoi must not deny it.

C. Any assurances from Hanoi can reach the United States direct, or through Soviet channels, or through the Soviet and British Governments. This is for North Vietnam to decide. END QUOTE.

3. In explaining about text, we believe British will have made clear that our stopping "augmenting" would still permit rotation and continued supply. Stoppage of infiltration defined as meaning that men and arms cannot move from DRV into South Vietnam. You should note also that wording of subpara A precludes any sudden last-minute reinforcements after bombing has stopped.

4. Deprived of additional men and of urgently needed equipment from the North, we believe NVA/VC forces would be significantly weakened in concrete terms and would probably suffer serious adverse effects on their morale. If infiltration in fact ceases and this word can be picked up by SVN and allied psychological warfare units, we believe there are big chances that Chieu Hoi and reconciliation programs would produce substantially larger returns. In short, we think proposal is defensible and forthcoming, if it should ever be surfaced, but at the same time clearly favorable in terms of its effect on the military and morale situation.

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7. Quite frankly our present judgment is that these present moves will come to nothing, but in reviewing the history of World War II and post-war crises, many other such situations have come to an end faster than we thought probable in advance and for reasons we did not fully comprehend until after the events. . . .

8. You may inform Westmoreland personally of this proposal, which is known here to General Wheeler. . . .

RUSK (Drafted by S. P. Bundy)

LONDON 6456 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1700, 10 Feb; Rec'd 1712, 10 Feb.

Here is text of Phase A-Phase B formula which is to be sent to Kosygin at his request ASAP. Need guidance urgently.

These steps are as follows:-

(A) The United States will stop bombing North Vietnam as soon as they are assured that infiltration from North Vietnam to South Vietnam will stop. This assurance can be communicated in secret if North Vietnam so wishes.

(B) Within a few days (with the period to be agreed between the two sides before the bombing stops) the United States will stop further augmenting their forces in South Vietnam and North Vietnam will stop infiltration and movement of forces into the South.

(C) The cessation of bombing of North Vietnam and the cessation of build-up of United States forces in the South are actions which will be immediately apparent.

(D) A cessation of infiltration is more difficult for the world to observe. Nevertheless the United States will not demand any public statement from North Vietnam.

(E) Any secret assurances from Hanoi can reach the United States direct, or through Soviet channels, or through the Soviet and British governments. This is for North Vietnam to decide.

BRUCE

LONDON 6462 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1800, 10 Feb; Rec'd 1824, 10 Feb.

For the Secretary from Cooper

1. This morning's session was devoted primarily to Europe, but Wilson did take occasion to point out that he had submitted two proposals and

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Soviets had not replied as yet to either. Kosygin then indicated that he wanted to hear the Phase A - Phase B proposal once again, and having heard it he asked Wilson to put it in a form so that he could telegraph it as soon as possible,

. . . .

BRUCE.

LONDON 6481 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 0205, 11 Feb; Rec'd 0251, 11 Feb.

To Secretary from Bruce and Cooper

1. White House version of message passed to Kosygin prior his departure for Scotland with this introductory statement:

QTE. I have just received direct from the White House the following message which they have asked me to pass to you. You may take this now as the authentic U.S. position on the subject I discussed with you, and on which I handed a note to you this evening. UNQTE

2. Earlier British version had been given to Kosygin by Wilson when he saw him at Soviet reception earlier in evening.

. . . .

4. Cooper will go to Chequers (through back door) early Sunday afternoon and will be kept informed course of discussions as they proceed. Please provide Cooper with name of phone contact in event matters require immediate reporting or guidance on the spot..

BRUCE

February 11, 1967

By telephone (Feb. 11) Cooper reported British concern about our insistence that our Phase A-B formulation (para. 55) specify that infiltration "has stopped", which they noted was different than the future tense employed in the revised Point 14 release to the press on February 9.

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MOSCOW 3451 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1035, 11 Feb; Rec'd 1111, 11 Feb.

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2. After thanking DCM for coming over, Le Chang said he wished inform him that President's message to Ho Chi Minh delivered February 8 had been transmitted to Hanoi. Ho Chi Minh had received message and reply would be forwarded later.

3. In response DCM question when message received in Hanoi, Le Chang said it had been transmitted immediately.

THOMPSON

SAIGON 17822 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1200, 11 Feb; Rec;d 1310, 11 Feb.

1. Pursuant to your 135513, I called on Ky

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8. Our present judgment, I said, is that these moves will come to nothing, but in reviewing earlier crises, many other such situations have come to an end faster than we thought probable in advance. There may be one chance in ten that the other side is in deeper trouble than we realized.

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10. Ky listened attentively, and, after I had completed my statement, asked what kind of guarantees would there be -- meaning what kind of an inspection system.

11. I said that we were thinking of the ICC -- in the efficacy of which he expressed complete lack of confidence (as indeed do I).

12. He then said that he was afraid that if we stopped the bombing now, based on their promise and they don't keep their promise, public opinion would make it extremely difficult for us to resume the bombing

.

14. When I asked him whether he thought that they would accept our proposal, he first said that he did not think they would -- that there would be a loss of face for them in admitting that there ever had been a war. Then after some reflection, he said: "If I am Hanoi, I would say 'yes'. They would gain something, we would gain nothing. It is a certainty that they will not stop infiltration no matter how much they promise to do so".

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15. He felt that to try a thing like this now was premature. It was "too soon. It would be better to wait a few more months. We would then be in a better position to see the situation more clearly. We should not stop just as our military campaign is getting results, and as we are making progress politically."

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LODGE.

LONDON 6487 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1227, 11 Feb; Rec'd 1250, 11 Feb.
For Secretary from Cooper

1. I have just been informed by the FonOff that the Pope sent a private message to the PM last night asking him to urge Kosygin that there be a joint endorsement in the communique of the Pope's recent message to the three "warring parties."

2. My FonOff source thinks this will be a non-starter.

BRUCE.

LONDON 6488 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1227, 11 Feb; Rec'd 1340, 11 Feb.
For Secretary from Bruce and Cooper

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2. One of the "contingencies" which Wilson has particularly in mind rose from what he describes as a "jocular exchange" between himself and Kosygin at the Soviet reception last night. If the two sides did not come to an agreement Sunday night, Kosygin and Wilson thought that next step to consider might be sending Gromyko and Brown to Washington and for Kosygin and Wilson to go to Hanoi. The Gromyko-Brown visit was apparently brushed aside as a private joke, but the Kosygin-Wilson visit to Hanoi was regarded, by Wilson if not by Kosygin, as a more serious possibility.

3. Wilson felt, however, that much would be gained if he made an offer to go to Hanoi with or without Kosygin. . . .

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BRUCE

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LONDON 6493 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1615, 11 Feb; Rec'd 1704, 11 Feb.

Eyes only for Secretary from Bruce

1. If Secretary agrees I would appreciate this message being passed to Secretary McNamara.
2. I would not presume to comment on extent of the military disadvantage of our not renewing bombing in North Vietnam until Kosygin has left London. I do feel, however, absolutely compelled to express a personal opinion as to what I consider would be its adverse political effects at this time.
3. As I understand it, a decision by the USG for such renewal has already been taken, but would it not be possible to postpone ensuing action for the approximately thirty five hours; (reckoned in GMT) before Kosygin departs from here, and, during that period, to make no public declaration on the subject.
4. My reasons are:
 - A. Although there are no grounds for being more than lukewarmly optimistic over anything of substantial value emerging from the current talks, it is quite evident that Kosygin, within the limitations under which he operates, seems almost as desirous as ourselves to bring about a cessation of hostilities in Vietnam. During his stay today in Scotland, he may be disturbed, and rendered even more suspicious than usual, over what will probably appear to him the discrepancies between our last statement of conditions delivered to him last night as he was boarding a train), and certain preceding ones notably point fourteen, in our list of fourteen, which he has. I believe his concern over the disruption of other Soviet foreign policies resulting from deep involvement in Vietnam, coupled with what has become an obsessive, almost pathological distrust of the Chinese, incline him strongly in favor of using whatever influence he may possess in Hanoi to bring about negotiations between Ho and ourselves.
 - B. Since renunciation of bombing of the North with reciprocal response from Hanoi has become almost everywhere a symbol of US seriousness in desiring a peaceful settlement, bombing as a term has taken on a political connotation independent of its military significance.
 - C. I would expect Kosygin, who has been acting in concert with Brezhnev, will not disclose his full hand until the meeting at Chequers tomorrow evening. But if at that time it is evident that he does not have sufficient prestige to postpone even for the short time he will still be on British soil a resumption of the type of operation he has steadily inveighed against, I would guess that he will prove definitively intransigent, and henceforth far more difficult to seek cooperation from. Then, too, his opinion of Wilson's credibility, already shaken by last night's imbroglio, may lead his Russian suspiciousness into dark imaginings.

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D. It seems to me by refraining still for a matter of hours from punishing the North Vietnamese for a flagrant breach of the truce, we might, though we would have no assurance of it, succeed in not alienating the great potential usefulness of our until recently improbable ally.

BRUCE.

STATE 135627 (to Amembassy London), TS/Nodis, Sent 1908, 11 Feb.

1. This responds to your telecons relaying message from Wilson about resumption of bombing.
2. As you know, we did not want to make any commitments to extend the TET bombing stand-down. You also know that our basic position remains not to stop bombing in return for mere willingness to talk.
3. However, we have great respect for your opinion and accept your recommendation not to conduct military actions against the North until Kosygin leaves. It must be absolutely clear to Wilson that we would then go ahead and that we will not consider a further deferral.
4. Wilson should not refer to resumption of bombing on his own initiative. If Kosygin asks about it, we suggest that Wilson relay that he is not familiar with details of allied military plans but that US attitude on this point has been made clear.
5. Wilson should be left in no doubt that we cannot prolong suspension of bombing in absence of firm word on infiltration. He should also know that when we say "stop infiltration" we mean "stop infiltration." We cannot trade a horse for a rabbit and will react to bad faith on this point. We are losing lives today because such commitments in Laos Accords of 1962 were treated with contempt by Hanoi and Co-Chairmen and ICC could do nothing about it.
6. About Wilson trip to Hanoi, we see little point in it. We thought two Co-Chairmen had concluded that best prospects lie in bilateral contact between US and Hanoi. Further, we could not become involved in a visit which would raise problem of another unrequited suspension of bombing.
7. Wilson is of course already aware that the South Vietnamese and we are resuming operations in the South tomorrow (112300 Zulu) and that we have been carrying on bombing operations in Laos throughout.
8. Septel will contain our comments on the question of tenses in our proposal.

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

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STATE 135662 (to Amembassy London), TS/Nodis, Sent 2145, 11 Feb.

For Ambassador and Cooper Only

1. This responds to your report of British concern about our insistence that draft specify that infiltration "has stopped." We gather they are pointing to apparent inconsistency between this position and the future tense employed in the revised point 14 released here Thursday.

2. You should give them the following:

a. As previous message made clear, we face immediate specific problem of possible three divisions poised just north of DMZ. We must be in position to insist that these cannot be moved into SVN just before their undertaking takes effect.

b. We recognize that revised point 14 spoke in future tense, but that formulation related to a different proposal, i.e., bombing cessation alone on our side, not bombing cessation plus troop augmentation which of course are two major commitments on our part.

c. British should be aware (as we realize State 133834 did not make clear) that message conveyed to Hanoi was in same terms as final corrected draft, i.e., that we must be assured that infiltration has stopped. In the last 24 hours, we have information that Soviets are aware of contents of this message, presumably through their Hanoi contacts, so that change in tense in final draft given to Soviets did not repeat not come as surprise to Soviets or Hanoi and cannot have impaired British credibility.

d. In any event, our position on this point remains firm because of the special problem posed by the divisions north of the DMZ. We very much doubt whether Soviets or Hanoi will reject proposal for this reason. If they should come back on it, we would of course wish to be informed.

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

STATE 135675 (to Amembassy Saigon), TS/Nodis, Sent 2215, 11 Feb.

Literally Eyes Only for Ambassador

1. We are sending you separate instruction to inform Ky that we have decided that we should refrain from bombing the North until Kosygin leaves London. In conveying this to Ky, you should make clear that this decision was dictated solely by extreme British concern and vital importance of British support,

. . . .

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

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STATE 135676 (to Amembassy Saigon), S/Nodis, Sent 2215, 11 Feb.

Eyes only Ambassadors

1. Saigon, Bangkok and Vientiane are receiving military message directing that bombing and naval operations against North Viet-Nam not repeat not be resumed until after Kosygin leaves London. This decision constitutes a one-shot exception to our standing policy, Our policy on not repeat not stopping bombing in return for talks remains unchanged.

2. Saigon should inform GVN of this decision. We leave it to Bangkok and Vientiane whether they think some notification would be desirable. . . .

. . . .

4. Canberra, Wellington, Seoul and Manila may in their discretion arrange unobtrusive contacts

(Not signed - Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

February 12, 1967

Late on February 11, Bruce and Cooper reported that they had had a stormy session with Wilson and Brown (London's 6495), who were relieved that the bombing stand-down would continue while Kosygin was in London but concerned that the bombing would begin immediately after his departure. A greater problem, however, was the change in tenses in respect to the stoppage of bombing. Their formulation of the paragraph was based on an earlier message passed to Kosygin on February 7. This formulation was based on the last of the 14 Points. Since Washington raised no objection to this formulation earlier in the week, they assumed they were on safe ground. They now feel the ground has shifted under them. Furthermore, if we had passed the message directly to Hanoi on February 7, in terms of the past tense, why did we not inform them of this?

In the early morning hours of February 12, Wilson sent two messages by private wire to the President, outlining in the first the "hell of a situation" he is in for his last day of talks with Kosygin and emphasizing his need to reestablish trust because not only will Kosygin have doubts about Wilson's credibility but, in addition, Kosygin will have lost credibility in Hanoi and possibly among his colleagues. Wilson said he planned to tell Kosygin that the present situation arises from deep US concern about the intensive North Vietnamese movements during the TET period. He felt he had to get Kosygin into as relaxed as possible posture and to tell him that the USSR-UK position must be not to concern themselves with military activities but to concentrate on the longer term political situation.

Wilson expressed considerable anguish about the shift in tense. He said he now realized Kosygin had bit on February 10 because he realized

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Wilson had given him a softer version than the message passed directly to Hanoi. Under the circumstances, Wilson felt he must stand by his version. If Kosygin accepted, he would have to press his line on the President. If it is impossible for the President to accept, Wilson felt he and the President would have to reason together about the situation which would then arise. More generally, he hoped to get Kosygin into a position where he and Wilson accepted joint responsibility for trying to assist the parties concerned in the fighting to reach agreement. This, he recognized, would be difficult particularly when the bombing restarts. He hoped to nail Kosygin to a continuing acceptance of a joint role of lawyers representing respective clients who must try to get a settlement out of court, ad referendum to the two clients. In view of the "clear breakdown" in communications and understanding during this week; Wilson felt he should meet with the President very soon.

In his second message, Wilson described in detail the misunderstanding that had arisen about the tense used in the infiltration paragraph.

At 0336, February 12, a direct response was sent by the President to Wilson (repeated to London as State's 135718), pointing out that the matter does not hang on the tense of verbs. Moscow had the Phase A-B formulation in November from George Brown. Hanoi had it from the Poles. Meanwhile, their build-up of forces has continued through three periods of no bombing (Christmas, New Year's and TET). We have heard nothing from Hanoi, although many intermediaries have attempted to negotiate with us. We cannot stop the bombing while three or more divisions dash south from the DMZ before Hanoi's promise to stop infiltration takes effect. We do not agree that our statement to Wilson on February 7 is inconsistent with either our message to Hanoi or our formula for Wilson and Kosygin on February 10. We asked on February 7 for an "assured stoppage" of infiltration. In Wilson's version of the A-B formula it was transmuted into an assurance that infiltration "will stop". This is a quite different matter. We promptly recognized this and informed Burke Trend by telephone that we would transmit our response shortly. The President emphasized that no formula can be satisfactory to us--and perhaps to Hanoi--unless there is clarity about two matters:

- a. the timing of a cessation of bombing, cessation of infiltration, and no further augmentation of forces; and
- b. how assurance in this matter of infiltration will be established.

Wilson was also informed that Hanoi had received our message and has told us that a direct response would be forthcoming. The President emphasized the importance of the US and UK staying together and not permitting the other side to play one position off against another.

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The President concluded with a statement of deep appreciation for Wilson's efforts, an affirmation of intent to express publicly our thanks, and a disavowal of the possibility of giving him a power of attorney.

Wilson promptly responded by private wire, expressing full agreement about the grave danger of a PAVN rush southward if there is an interval of even two or three days between the stoppage of bombing and the stoppage of infiltration. He said he had been considering an alternative way of securing the required guarantee, namely that the prior two-way assurance should contain a time-table if possible underwritten by or communicated through the Russians. What might be provided is that the US would agree in advance to stop the bombing in return for Hanoi's prior assurance that they would stop the infiltration, say six hours or less afterwards. He said he would try it as his idea on Kosygin if the atmosphere were right. Finally, the Prime Minister noted that there had been a misunderstanding as a result of his reference to a "power of attorney". Clearly, he said, that would be out of the question. The key words, he added, were "ad referendum" (repeated to London as State's 135731).

STATE 135718 (to Amembassy London), TS/Nodis, Sent 0948, 12 Feb 67

Literally Eyes Only for Amb Bruce and Cooper from Walt Rostow

The following message was transmitted at 3:36 a.m. 12 Feb to Downing Street.

I have carefully read and considered your two messages bearing on your talks later today with Kosygin.

I would wish to leave these thoughts with you on the present position.

I really do not believe that the matter hangs on the tense of verbs. Moscow had from George Brown in November the Phase A - Phase B formulation. Hanoi also had it from the Poles. Hanoi has shown no flicker of interest for more than two months. Meanwhile their build-up continues and they have used 3 periods of no bombing (Christmas, New Year's and TET) for large scale movement and preparation of their forces for further military action.

I want to emphasize that we have had nothing yet from Hanoi. They receive our messages - but thus far it has been a one-way conversation. Many intermediaries have attempted, from time to time, to negotiate with us. Everyone seems to wish to negotiate except Hanoi. I wish someone would produce a real live North Vietnamese prepared to talk.

Understandably your present preoccupation is Kosygin's attitude. But thus far, Kosygin has not transmitted one word from Hanoi except to endorse their Foreign Minister's interview with Burchett in his own press conference.

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From an operational point of view, we cannot stop the bombing while three (possibly four) divisions dash south from the DMZ before - underline word their rpt their - promise is to take effect. I hope you will see the importance of this for the men out there who are doing the fighting.

We do not accept the view that our statement to you of our position on February 7 is inconsistent with either our message to Hanoi or our formula for you and Kosygin of February 10. We asked on February 7 for an "assured stoppage" of infiltration. In your version of an A-B formula it was transmuted to an assurance that infiltration "will stop". This, in our view, is a quite different matter. We so recognized promptly on receipt of your formula and telephoned Burke Trend that we were drafting and would transmit our response shortly.

The problem of substance is that no formula can be satisfactory to us - and perhaps to Hanoi - unless there is clarity about two matters:

- The timing of a cessation of bombing, cessation of infiltration, and no further augmentation of forces.
- How assurance in the matter of infiltration will be established, you have correctly pointed out that the cessation of bombing and the stoppage of augmentation by us will necessarily be public.

I would not expect Kosygin to come in at Chequers with anything firm and definitive by way of a positive response. In that case we can take stock and see where we go from here on the diplomatic tract. If he does respond positively and constructively, we can then proceed to the clarifications that both sides will surely require. .

Hanoi has received our messages and has just today informed us that a direct response to us from Hanoi will be forthcoming. We suppose that we shall not hear from them until your talks are concluded. There is importance, then, in our staying together. We must not let them play one position off against another.

Let me add that I much appreciate your dedicated effort during this week - and will, of course, express publicly our thanks. I'm always glad to know that you are in my corner but I would have some difficulty, in view of my responsibilities and problems here, in giving anyone a power of attorney. I hope for peace more than you can possibly know and will be much interested in what happens at Chequers.

(Text received from White House)

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STATE 135734 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, Sent 1815, 12 Feb 67.

For Monday morning delivery to Ambassador unless instructed otherwise by SEPTTEL.

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3. State of play in London is that British on Feb. 7 gave Kosygin as their own draft a summary of the proposal contained in the President's letter to Ho. However, unlike that letter, the British draft of that date clearly separated the stopping of the bombing from the actual stopping of infiltration, although it required assurance of the latter before the former would be done. This differs from the President's letter to Ho, which of course spoke of assurance that infiltration had stopped already.

4. This difference has since caused difficulty with the British. On Feb. 10, Wilson repeated the substance of the British Feb. 7 version to Kosygin, who expressed real interest -- we corrected the British draft so that it insisted that we have assurance that the infiltration had stopped. . . . the British. . . . caught Kosygin just as he took his train that evening, but it is possible, indeed probable, that the earlier "will stop" version was transmitted by the Soviets to Hanoi.

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6. From your standpoint, the important thing is whether the Soviets may have been misled at any stage. From a direct Dobrynin reference with the Secretary on Friday evening, we now know that the Soviets are familiar with the contents of the President's letter to Ho, and this direct statement means that you can assume this in any conversations with the Soviets. In short, they knew our position very shortly after the President's letter was delivered, and again had it in clear form when we cleared the authorized version for transmission to Kosygin on the evening of the 10th. At most, they may have been very briefly misled on the afternoon of the 10th

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RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

STATE 135735 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, Sent 1816, 12 Feb 67.

For Monday morning delivery to Ambassador unless instructed otherwise by SEPTTEL.

Relevant texts to go with our septel on dealings with the British are as follows:

1. Oral text used by Wilson on Feb. 7:

QTE. I am now satisfied that the Americans would now be prepared

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to move to further actions to strengthen mutual confidence if they were able to secure some assurance that this move would be reciprocated by the other side. For instance, I believe that they are now seeking to get word to Hanoi on the following lines. They recognize the need for a first and visible step. They further recognize that this step must mean the cessation of the bombing. This I believe they would do, and they recognize that it must be presented as being done unconditionally. Therefore we have to use our ingenuity to divorce in presentation the stopping of the bombing from the consequential actions. Yet you and I know that the consequential actions are essential if we are to get the bombing stopped.

The consequential actions are as follows. The US are willing to stop the buildup of their forces in the South if they are assured that the movement of North Vietnamese forces from the North to the South will stop at the same time. Essentially therefore the two stages are kept apart. But because the US Govt know that the second stages will follow, they will therefore be able first to stop the bombing, even if there is a short period between the first stage and the actions to be taken by both sides in the second stage. There would be balanced concessions in the second stage; the first stage would be carried out by the US alone; but the US would only carry out the first stage because they would know that the second stage would follow within a short period of time.

The entry of American reinforcements to Vietnam can be easily observed. Therefore there could be no doubt on the part of the North Vietnamese that the Americans were keeping their part of the bargain. The North Vietnamese action in the second stage would be seen as in response to the US action in the second stage but it would be the result of a prior secret assurance. END QTE.

2. Original British written text of Feb. 10, given the Soviets at the reception that evening:

QTE. (A) The US will stop bombing North Vietnam as soon as they are assured that infiltration from North Vietnam to South Vietnam will stop. This assurance can be communicated in secret if North Vietnam so wishes.

(B) Within a few days (with the period to be agreed between the two sides before the bombing stops) the US will stop further augmenting their forces in South Vietnam and North Vietnam will stop infiltration and movement of forces into the South.

(C) The cessation of bombing of North Vietnam and the cessation of build-up of US forces in the South are actions which will be immediately apparent.

(D) A cessation of infiltration is more difficult for the world to observe. Nevertheless the US will not demand any public statement from North Vietnam.

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(E) Any secret assurances from Hanoi can reach the US direct, or through Soviet channels, or through the Soviet and British Governments. This is for North Vietnam to decide. END QTE.

3. Final version cleared by us and given to Kosygin late on the evening of Feb. 10:

QTE. (A) The US will order a cessation of bombing of North Vietnam as soon as they are assured that infiltration from North Vietnam to South Vietnam has stopped. This assurance can be communicated in secret if North Vietnam so wishes.

(B) Within a few days (with the period to be agreed with the two sides before the bombing stops) the US will stop further augmenting their force in South Vietnam. The cessation of bombing of North Vietnam is an action which will be immediately apparent. This requires that the stoppage of infiltration become public very quickly thereafter. If Hanoi is unwilling to announce the stoppage of infiltration, the US must do so at the same time it stops augmentation of US forces. In that case, Hanoi must not deny it.

(C) Any assurances from Hanoi can reach the US direct, or through Soviet channels, or through the Soviet and British Governments. This is for North Vietnam to decide. END QTE.

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

STATE 135744 (to Amembassy Saigon), S/Nodis, Sent 2439, 12 Feb.

Eyes Only for Ambassador

1. Situation in London is that at his suggestion we have just authorized Wilson to tell Kosygin that if Hanoi accepts our proposal by 10 a.m. tomorrow London time we would continue bombing suspension. Requirement remains that Hanoi assure us that infiltration has ten stopped, with our cessation of augmentation to follow in a few days.

2. Military orders have now gone out for operations to be planned for execution at 2400 February 13 your time, subject to final execute message to be sent at 2030 your time. . . .

. . . .

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

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STATE 135748 (to Amembassy London), TS/Nodis, Sent 0205, 13 Feb 67.

The following message from the President was sent this afternoon by private wire to the Prime Minister:

BEGIN TEXT

As I pointed out early this morning, the A-B offer has been outstanding now for about three months. I gather from Cooper that as of the time you went into dinner tonight, you had no reply from Kosygin. We have had no reply from Hanoi.

Nevertheless, you have worked nobly this week to bring about what all humanity wants: A decisive move towards peace. It is an effort that will be long remembered. I feel a responsibility to give you this further chance to make that effort bear fruit. We will go more than half way. I am prepared to go the last mile in this week's particular effort; although none of us can regard a failure tonight as the end of the road.

I must, of course, also bear in mind my responsibility to our men who are fighting there, to our allies, to the people of South Viet-Nam who are counting on us to bring about an honorable peace consistent with our commitments to them.

Therefore I agree with you that you should go forward and try once again with Kosygin saying to him:

BEGIN QUOTE

If you can get a North Vietnamese assurance--communicated either direct to the United States or through you--before 10:00 a.m. British time tomorrow that all movement of troops and supplies into South Viet-Nam will stop at that time, I will get an assurance from the US that they will not resume bombing of North Viet-Nam from that time. Of course the US build up would also then stop within a matter of days.

This would then give you and me the opportunity to try to consolidate and build on what has been achieved by bringing the parties together and promoting further balanced measures of deescalation. END QUOTE

With this deal consummated, we would, of course, be prepared to move promptly to a neutral spot to engage in unconditional negotiations designed to bring peace to the area.

Herewith some further observations.

It is significant that Kosygin reflects no further word from Hanoi. Our own private line with Hanoi remains silent. Actually, Kosygin may prefer that any final deal come bilaterally after he leaves London in view of his China problem.

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Presumably two co-chairmen would continue to be in touch with each other. It would be helpful if communique could express support of two co-chairmen for 1954 and 1962 accords and agreement that any differences arising out of these accords should be settled by peaceful means.

END TEXT

RUSK (Text from White House).

STATE 135751 (to Amembassy London), S/Nodis, Sent 0210, 13 Feb 67.

We plan announcement tomorrow about noon EST as follows:

BEGIN QUOTE

As you know, the South Vietnamese Government announced on the 11th that its forces and those of other nations assisting South Viet-Nam would resume normal operations during the day on February 12. This resumption was in accordance with the truce period announced by the South Vietnamese Government some weeks ago. As the South Vietnamese Government had made clear in early January and again last week, it was prepared to discuss extension of the truce period at any time. There was no response to this offer.

During the Tet period, bombing and other military operations against North Viet-Nam were also suspended. This suspension was continued for short additional period in order to avoid any possibility that earlier resumption would be misconstrued in relation to Mr. Kosygin's visit to London. Operations have now been resumed. END QUOTE

Press here is already printing large number of speculative stories that continued suspension is due to Kosygin visit. We assume press will eventually reach correct conclusion that we did not wish to make any announcement of added suspension in order to avoid implication of putting pressure on London decisions.

RUSK (Drafted by J. P. Walsh)

February 13, 1967

On February 13, Cooper reported that at 0955 London-time Wilson and Brown had queried Kosygin as to whether he had received an answer from Hanoi. Kosygin replied in the negative but said he was still trying (London's 6498).

On the same day, Cooper reported that he had been told in the Foreign Office that: (a) between 3:00 a.m. and 3:47 a.m. London-time (13 February), three priority "President's Cipher" telegrams were sent from the Soviet

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delegation in London to Moscow; (b) at 9:30 a.m. today according to a telephone intercept Kosygin called Breshnev and said "a great possibility of achieving the aim, if the Vietnamese will understand the present situation that we have passed to them, they will have to decide. All they need to do is to give a confidential declaration"; (c) Breshnev confirmed that Kosygin's telegram to the Vietnamese had been sent (London's 6500). NSA also reported that the North Vietnamese transmitted a 201-group message from Hanoi to Moscow at 1609Z (1109 EST); also a 500-group message was transmitted to Hanoi from Moscow at 0820Z (0320 EST). Thompson was informed of these developments (State's 135853).

STATE 135758 (to Amembassy London), TS/Nodis, Sent 0707, 13 Feb 67

Literally Eyes Only for Amb Bruce from Walt Rostow

The following was transmitted to 10 Downing Street at 130120 A.M. EST.

We have considered the case for further delay to receive a message from Hanoi beyond 10:00 a.m. British time, which you suggested.

I have gone into this with my senior advisers and, after carefully considering your suggestion, the problems you presented, and the problem here -- including the morale of our uniformed men -- we are extending the time by 6 hours. This is as long as we believe is advisable.

I am sure you would want to know that our Joint Chiefs, CINCPAC, and General Westmoreland have unanimously opposed the Tet and other truces and extensions thereto -- not only on the grounds of troop morale but because of the cost in human lives. We will wait, then, for information that may be forthcoming until 11:00 a.m. Washington time -- 4:30 p.m. your time. Military operations against the North will be permitted to resume between 11:00 a.m. and noon our time.

In making this decision I bore in mind Moscow's and Hanoi's problems of transmittal two ways. But I also was conscious of the fact that they have had the possibility of responding to essentially this message for the 3 months since we gave it to the Poles and you gave it to the Russians; and the 5 days since it was transmitted direct to Hanoi and also given by you to Kosygin.

If there is any interest in some such A-B proposition, there has - and still is - been ample time for them either to agree or to come back with a counter-proposal.

Your gallant last minute effort -- which I consented to -- is one on which they must move. On receiving it they must be either ready to

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make a response or not. A few hours either way cannot be significant. Bear in mind that the offer for a reciprocal de-escalation has not been withdrawn. It can be accepted any moment they may desire to do so, even though operations are in effect. They could be suspended momentarily. The channels for discussions on these or other lines will remain open.

Right now supplies and weapons are moving down from the North at a high rate. While bearing in mind the safety of more than a half million of our men, I feel I should, nevertheless, go as far as possible to meet your suggestion and, therefore, am stretching the beginning of military operations by another 6 hours.

Considering all the time and conversation that has gone on before, this allows added time for talk if they are really serious.

I hope you have a good chance to catch up on sleep after this arduous and interesting week which, I am inclined to believe, will prove in the end to have been most constructive.

KATZENBACH

(Text received from White House)

SAIGON 17875 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1100, 13 Feb, Rec'd 1202, 13 Feb.

1. Pursuant to your 135744, I flew to Dalat Monday afternoon and saw Ky.

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7. I said that many speculative press stories were now appearing, adding that General Westmoreland and I had made (and would make) no comment whatsoever about the matter before this statement is issued in Washington. I repeated that secrecy on this matter is of the highest importance.

8. Finally I recalled his expression of concern Saturday regarding the effectiveness of the International Control Commission in verifying possible infiltration from the North. I said I would like to add to what I said then that in the unlikely event that Hanoi should take up the proposal we would expect ourselves to conduct extensive reconnaissance. Our reconnaissance capabilities together with other intelligence operations in Laos should, I said, give us a virtual certainty of detecting any substantial North Vietnamese violations of an undertaking to stop infiltration.

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LODGE

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STATE 135799 (to Amembassy London & Moscow), TS/Nodis, Sent 1700, 13 Feb 67.

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3. For Moscow background, Wilson last night requested an additional 24 hours of suspension, and we replied that we would extend only until 1600 British time, which is of course 1100 our time. Time period was specifically conveyed to Kosygin by British this morning in London prior to Kosygin departure. Neither last night nor this morning, apparently, did Kosygin himself urge a longer period or object to the clearly implied time limit as in any sense an ultimatum. . . .

4. British must realize that Soviets went out on a very long limb, and that any exposure of serious discussions in fact carried on could do serious and indeed irreparable harm to future Soviet role. We are deeply concerned that circle of British privy to discussions was not repeat not small, and that some among these may succumb to long-standing British temptation to indicate through the press or leak that British were playing a significant role It goes without saying that British silence is imperative whatever they think of positions we put forward or timing of our resumption.

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KATZENBACH (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

LONDON 6516 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1735, 13 Feb; Rec'd 1909, 13 Feb.

Eyes Only for Secretary and Rostow from Cooper

1. Although some of the events of the past 24 hours have been overtaken, and some other strain credulity, it might be well to try to reconstruct them for the record.

2. As I indicated over the telephone to the Secretariat Duty Officer Sunday morning, the message from the President to the Prime Minister that had been just received in London seemed, on the basis of preliminary reactions, to have cleared the air. (This was confirmed later in the day.)

3. In the early afternoon, I met Palliser at Downing Street (back door), and was then hustled out to Chequers (tradesmen's entrance). I was installed in the garret "prison room" (graced by Lady Mary Grey in 1565).

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7. After about an hour, Murray (FonOff) emerged with a draft communique on Vietnam which the Sovs proposed as an alternative to the British draft. Murray and I reworded the Sov submission and with one or two miniscule modifications, the Sovs bought the revised version -- an anodyne and not very nourishing document.

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8. Murray left a copy of the message the PM had sent to Washington earlier in the day (I had not seen it until then). Hedging against the possibility of being queried later in the evening for a reaction to this, I called Washington (Read) and was informed that the first para (which acknowledged the danger to American Forces of the buildup North of the DMZ) had met with a favorable reception. Read was non-committal on the second para (i.e., Wilson's proposal for a telescoped time period between Phase A-Phase B), and I did not press him. However, I did suggest that the PM might, one last time, warn Kosygin about the implications of the buildup North of the DMZ and see if he could get Kosygin to pass his own warning on to Hanoi. Read indicated this would do no harm.

9. Kosygin expressed concern regarding British press reports (Henry Brandon in the Sunday Times was a good example) that the "Hawks" in Washington were in the ascendancy. According to Kosygin, this would only result in permitting the "Hawks" (i.e., Chinese faction) in Hanoi to get a leg up on the "Soviet Wing". (Incidentally, Wilson said that Kosygin was much more forthcoming about the "two factions" in Hanoi than he had been earlier in the week.)

10. I suggested to Wilson that he might try to get Kosygin to press Hanoi to stand fast north of the DMZ. Wilson thought this would be worth a try. We then worked out a somewhat broader formula which Trend, Palliser and I was later spelled out in writing and checked with Wilson, I then transmitted this by telephone to Read and by teletape to Rostow. Wilson said he would not submit this proposition until he had the President's okay.

11. Wilson obviously felt that even if Kosygin rejected the formula, he would be better off in the House of Commons for this last minute attempt.

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14. Wilson, Brown, Burke, Trend, Palliser, Murray, Amb Bruce, and I assembled at Downing Street shortly after midnight. Wilson was delighted with the message he received from Washington, and dashed out to Claridges with Brown and the interpreter at his heels.

15. He returned at about 0215 to report that Kosygin had evidenced great interest in the proposal. Kosygin said he would transmit it to Hanoi but expressed concern about the brief time available before an answer was expected. Wilson reported that Kosygin was in fact writing a message as he talked. (We have had later confirmation of this.)

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KAISER

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STATE 135973 (to Amembassy Buenos Aires ToSec), TS/Nodis, Sent 2141, 13 Feb.

Amb. Dean delivered following personal message from Foreign Secretary Brown to Secretary Rusk to the Acting Secretary at noon today. BEGIN TEXT of Message dated February 13:

It has been a terrific week, and as I send this I still have my fingers crossed with five hours to go to the deadline on Vietnam. I am deeply impressed by the length to which you have been willing to go to meet us, and I just want to say to you that I know how much you have been working on the side of the angels, as I have here, and I appreciate enormously all you have done. Chet and David have both been invaluable.

END TEXT

KATZENBACH (Drafted by B. H. Read)

STATE 138142 (to Amembassy Saigon), TS/Nodis, Sent 2258, 13 Feb 67.

. . . .

3. For disclosure to Ky at your discretion and timing, fact is that we have not repeat not had any response whatever from Hanoi. We interpret Hanoi broadcast reply to the Pope, carried Hanoi Radio 1532Z on Feb 13, as a typical Hanoi method of signing off. This broadcast was made just a half-hour before the expiration of the time limit for response that we had given to Kosygin through the British. (FYI. Our plans had always run toward noon our time, but we formally extended the deadline to 1100 our time at British request on Sunday night. End FYI). . . .

KATZENBACH (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

Hanoi VNA International Service in English 1642 GMT 13 Feb 67--B (FBIS, Far East, 14 February 1967).

(Text) Hanoi, 13 February--Pope Paul VI recently sent a message to President Ho Chi Minh, expressing the wish to see an early peaceful solution to the Vietnam problem.

President Ho Chi Minh today sent a message of reply to the Pope. Full text of the reply message reads:

I wish to thank Your Holiness for his message of 8 February 1967. In his message, Your Holiness expressed the wish to see an early peaceful solution to the Vietnam question.

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Our people sincerely love peace in order to build our country in independence and freedom. However, the U.S. imperialists have sent to South Vietnam half a million U.S. and satellite troops and used more than 600,000 puppet troops to wage a war against our people. They have committed monstrous crimes. They have used the most barbarous arms, such as napalm, products, and toxic gases, to massacre our compatriots and burn down our villages, pagodas, churches, hospitals, schools Their acts of aggression have grossly violated the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam and seriously menaced peace in Asia and the world. To defend their independence and peace, the Vietnamese people are resolutely fighting against the aggressors. They are confident that justice will triumph. The U.S. imperialists must put an end to their aggression in Vietnam, end unconditionally and definitively the bombing and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, withdraw from South Vietnam all American and satellite troops, recognize the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, and let the Vietnamese people settle themselves their own affairs. Only in such conditions can real peace be restored in Vietnam.

It is my hope that Your Holiness, in the name of humanity and justice, will use his high influence to urge that the U.S. Government respect the national rights of the Vietnamese people, namely peace, independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity as recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam.

With my high regards, Ho Chi Minh.

February 14, 1967

SAIGON 17949 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1050, 14 Feb; Rec'd 1302, 14 Feb.

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2. I wonder . . . whether it might not be of greater value to equate the cessation of bombing and non-augmentation of forces not only with infiltration but also with the ending of the assassination, torture, and kidnapping of village and other local officials.

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9. D'Orlandi told me (septel) that he considers cessation of assassination of local officials "much more feasible" than cessation of infiltration.

LODGE

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LONDON 6543 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1053, 14 Feb; Rec'd 1259, 14 Feb.

For Acting Secretary and Rostow from Kaiser and Cooper

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2. The mood of Wilson and the others was friendly, understanding, and cheerful.

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4. Wilson recognizes that he will have some difficult moments with his Party in Commons (indeed 100 Labor MPs have already signed a petition against resumption of bombing) but he seems confident that in the light of everything that has taken place this past week he can deal with it.

5. Wilson said he had given a background press conference to the lobby correspondents following his appearance in the House. He pointed out to them that Hanoi could have peace if they had shown any readiness to respond to the efforts that had been exerted to reach a settlement. This morning's London papers have taken this line and have given the US, the UK and the Russians very high marks for their efforts. Hanoi is universally regarded as the villain in the piece.

KAISER

BUENOS AIRES 3082 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Sent 1624, 14 Feb; Rec'd 1821, 14 feb.

For Acting Secretary from Secretary

Please pass to Pat Dean following for George Brown from me: QTE
Many thanks for your good message and, more particularly, for your extraordinary labors during the past week. I hope that the long and late hours invested in these probes may stir some response from Hanoi even though Ho's message to the Pope is not encouraging. I was much interested in seeing that Kosygin at least seems to take their co-chairman role seriously and reflected a desire to bring this war to a conclusion. My own guess is that the Russian position has in fact moved somewhat but they and we face the same difficulty in getting Hanoi to move, but we will do our best over here, both in the battle and on the diplomatic front. Again my warm thanks. UNQTE.

RUSK

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STATE 136999 (to Amembassy London), TS/Nodis, Sent 2415, 14 Feb 67.

1. You should know that both Michael Stewart, at our request, and later Walt Rostow have called Palliser to express our grave misgivings about extent of Wilson disclosure in House and particularly his statement that agreement appeared "very near," that there was some secret plan, etc.

2. . . . , they have put us on the spot, since we had disclosed the whole proposal only to Ky personally, and had not told even such key allies repeat allies as the Australians and Koreans. . . .

3. this has just got to stop repeat stop.

KATZENBACH (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

February 15, 1967

Letter to President Johnson from Ho Chi Minh.

To His Excellency Mr. Lyndon B. Johnson,
President,
United States of America,

Your Excellency:

On February 10, 1967, I received your message. This is my reply.

Vietnam is thousands of miles away from the United States. The Vietnamese people have never done any harm to the United States. But contrary to the pledges made by its representative at the 1954 Geneva conference, the U.S. Government has ceaselessly intervened in Vietnam, it has unleashed and intensified the war of aggression in South Vietnam with a view to prolonging the partition of Vietnam and turning South Vietnam into a neo-colony and a military base of the United States. For over two years now, the U.S. Government has, with its air and naval forces, carried the war to the Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam, an independent and sovereign country.

The U.S. Government has committed war crimes, crimes against peace and against mankind. In South Vietnam, half a million U.S. and satellite troops have resorted to the most inhuman weapons and the most barbarous methods of warfare, such as napalm, toxic chemicals and gasses, to massacre our compatriots, destroy crops, and raze villages to the ground. In North Vietnam, thousands of U.S. aircraft have dropped hundreds of thousands of tons of bombs, destroying towns, villages, factories, schools. In your message, you apparently deplore the sufferings and destruction in Vietnam. May I ask you: Who has perpetrated these monstrous crimes? It is the United States and satellite troops. The U.S. Government is entirely responsible for the extremely serious situation in Vietnam.

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The U.S. war of aggression against the Vietnamese people constitutes a challenge to the countries of the socialist camp, a threat to the national independence movement, and a serious danger to peace in Asia and the world.

The Vietnamese people deeply love independence, freedom and peace. But in the face of the U.S. aggression, they have risen up, united as one man, fearless of sacrifices and hardships. They are determined to carry on their resistance until they have won genuine independence and freedom and true peace. Our just cause enjoys strong sympathy and support from the peoples of the whole world, including broad sections of the American people.

The U.S. Government has unleashed the war of aggression in Vietnam. It must cease this aggression. That is the only way to the restoration of peace. The U.S. Government must stop definitively and unconditionally its bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, withdraw from South Vietnam all U.S. and satellite troops, recognize the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, and let the Vietnamese people settle themselves their own affairs. Such is the basis (sic) content of the five-point stand of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which embodies the essential principles and provisions of the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam, it is the basic (sic) of a correct political solution to the Vietnam problem.

In your message, you suggested direct talks between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States. If the U.S. Government really wants these talks, it must first of all stop unconditionally its bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. It is only after the unconditional cessation of the U.S. bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States could enter into talks and discuss questions concerning the two sides.

The Vietnamese people will never submit to force, they will never accept talks under the threat of bombs.

Our cause is absolutely just. It is to be hoped that the U.S. Government will act in accordance with reason.

Sincerely,

Ho Chi Minh

MOSCOW 3501 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1043, 15 Feb; Rec'd 1131, 15 Feb.

Le Chang handed DCM at 1:00 p.m. Ho Chi Minh's reply to President's letter. Reply completely unyielding and in subsequent oral remarks, Le Chang said he could no longer meet with US representatives in Moscow. Text and full report follow.

THOMPSON

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SAIGON 18022 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1130, 15 Feb; Rec'd 1359, 15 Feb.

1. The decision authorizing me to tell Ky about the episode involving Wilson and Kosygin was unquestionably wise.

2. I also believe that it will save us a great deal of trouble in the end if we make it a practice to tell the GVN what we are planning to do ahead of time whenever it is likely that they will find out about it anyway. . . .

. . . .

4. There is a strong streak of fatalism in these people and if they feel they are left out of decisions which vitally affect them, they are quite capable of desperate action which would be contrary to our interests. Also this capacity for desperate action is what under other circumstances makes them valuable as allies.

LODGE

MOSCOW 3503 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1150, 15 Feb; Rec'd 1257, 15 Feb.

Ref: Moscow 3501

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2. Le Chang handed DCM Ho Chi Minh's reply to President's message delivered February 8, requesting that it be transmitted to President (septel). Le Chang then made following additional oral statement:

A. Position and attitude of DRV Govt are very correct and serious, and enjoy strong support of world public opinion, including American people. US, however, always obstinate and perfidious, and it continues advance conditions for cessation of bombings.

B. US had made use of DRV representative's receiving US representative in Moscow to deceive public opinion that secret negotiations going on while bombings continue.

C. Lately, US extended so-called suspension of bombings during Tet. Less than two days later, bombings were resumed on pretext that there had been no response from Hanoi. This constitutes insolent ultimatum to compel Vietnamese people to accept unacceptable conditions.

D. In such circumstances, DRV representative does not consider it possible receive US representative in Moscow on US proposal. Responsibility for this rests completely with us.

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3. After making sure he understood Le Chang's final statement correctly, DCM called his attention to President's February 13 statement and cited sentence stating that door to peace is and will remain open and US prepared go more than half way to meet any equitable overture from other side.

4. In response, Le Chang quoted final portion Ho's message, beginning with sentence stipulating cessation of bombings and all other acts of war against DRV as precondition if US really desires conversations.

THOMPSON.

STATE 137496 (to Amembassy Buenos Aires), TS/Nodis, Sent 1818, 15 Feb.

We are sending to you by separate cables in this series following immediately after this one Ho Chi Minh's reply to the President and the report of the latest Guthrie conversation on February 15.

Paragraph f of the Ho letter is clearly a combination of the formulations used by the DRV in Ho's February 13 reply to the Pope and the Trinh January 28 interview with Burchett. We find it interesting that in this post resumption period DRV is adhering to the exact formula in the Trinh interview, i.e. "It is only after the unconditional halting of the American bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV that the DRV and the US could begin talks and discuss questions affecting the two parties."

The President is anxious to have a "stocktaking" with you on where we go from here, and I think he would like to be assured that you will be back in time for luncheon next Tuesday. . . .

. . . .

KATZENBACH (Drafted by B. H. Read).

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February 16, 1967

STATE 138755 (to Amembassy Moscow & Buenos Aires), TS/Nodis

Ref: Moscow 3525

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2. Here, we are evaluating the situation tomorrow and would much appreciate your over-all assessment of possible impact of last week's events. To us it appears tentatively that the Soviets went quite far in even offering to present our proposal and the variant introduced by the British with the highly specific time limit factor. (We were very struck at absence of any indication of Kosygin referring to its ultimatum flavor.) Moreover, if Soviets in fact urged acceptance of this proposition, they went even further. Thus, unless they had some indication from Hanoi of possible give, we are inclined to wonder whether they may not have strained their credit very heavily indeed in Hanoi and caused Hanoi (or at least Chinese-oriented elements in it) to consider them a solid but compromise-minded friend. In these circumstances, our minds run to the thought that Hanoi may now be assessing its position in the most basic manner against this reading of Soviet policy, and might even be making a somewhat desperate appeal to the Chinese Communists to pull themselves together and give the kind of full support the Soviets are clearly not now inclined to give. In short, we believe possibilities of last week's developments could be very far reaching indeed.

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KATZENBACH (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

February 17, 1967

MOSCOW 3533 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 0833, 17 Feb; Rec's 0909, 17 Feb.

Ref: State 138755.

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2. At film showing at Embassy last night Sukhodrev, Kosygin's interpreter, who was present at all important conversations in London, remarked to me QTE that was quite a switch you pulled on us in the text of your proposal UNQTE obviously referring to the change in tenses.

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4. Possibility open to Soviets to use excuse of Chaos in China to slow down deliveries to North Vietnam but I doubt that they will do this.

THOMPSON

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LONDON 6680 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1730, 17 Feb; Rec'd 2009, 17 Feb.

Ref: State 136999

1. I saw Michael Palliser today and conveyed the full substance of reftel. I emphasized the fact that Prime Minister's suggestion that there was "secret plan" and that peace was very near had put us on the spot with our allies and was causing us considerable embarrassment at home. . . .

. . . .

3. Palliser stated It would have been difficult for the PM to make so effective a case for the US and British positions without saying the things he did in public. Palliser also recalled that the excellent British press on Tuesday, from the US point of view, was due largely to the Prime Minister's backgrounder the evening before. . . .

6. Comment. While Palliser was obviously genuine in expressing his understanding of the nature of our problems, he also made it clear that the PM was more bullish about the significance of last week than we were. Palliser stressed on several occasions the "dramatic" change in Kosygin's attitude in contrast to last July when the PM visited Moscow and even as late as November when Brown was there It is also the firm conviction of the British that Kosygin did transmit our last proposal to Hanoi and very possibly with the recommendation that "they give it serious consideration."

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KAISER

STATE 139631 (to Amembassy Moscow & Buenos Aires), TS/Nodis, Sent 2333, 17 Feb.

1. Bundy saw Zinchuk for private lunch today. Conversation made clear that Soviets were fully informed on Ho reply to us and on all our direct exchanges in Moscow, apparently in full detail. . . .

. . . .

3. Bundy then reviewed position we have taken on conditions for cessation of bombing, starting with Goldberg speech of September and followed by presentation of Phase A/Phase B formula through Brown to Soviets and simultaneously through Lewandowski to Hanoi. He added that in January we had noted Ho conversation with Baggs and Ashmore in which Ho had referred to cessation of US reinforcement, in addition to bombing, while of course insisting that Hanoi could not reciprocate Thus, Hanoi had had a general proposal along these lines for three months and this specific version on February 7 or 8.

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6. Zinchuk then said that the Soviets were "disappointed" and "uneasy" at our resumption of bombing. He did not repeat not charge us with any breach of any undertaking in so doing, but did say that the combination of our December 13-14 bombings, causing Hanoi to reject the Warsaw proposal for quiet talks without condition, and our present action, bringing to an end for the time being any chance of a favorable Hanoi reply on the London proposal, had caused Moscow to wonder whether it had become the basic US view that the military situation was steadily improving from our standpoint and that we therefore did not really want negotiations at the present time in the belief that the situation had become steadily more favorable to us.

7. There was then a long specific discussion of the December events, in which Bundy noted that the original message from the Poles has been exceedingly vague and had never made clear to us what Zinchuk was now asserting--that Hanoi was definitely willing to talk in the sense of exchanging views. Zinchuk responded that they had gone back over this with Hanoi and had ascertained firmly that this was the Hanoi position at that time. Secondly, Bundy noted that Rapacki's behavior between December 4 and December 10 had been and remained inexplicable to us; we had thought our position in mentioning the necessity for interpretation was entirely reasonable and simply could not understand why Rapacki had not gone ahead in that period but had on the contrary conveyed a negative Hanoi view to us as late as December 10. In short, Bundy argued that we had simply had a clear misunderstanding as to what Zinchuk now described as Hanoi's intent at that time.

8. As to the London outcome, Zinchuk argued that Hanoi had noted repeated statements by us that we had undertaken the bombing in order to get Hanoi to talk. Hence, Hanoi had supposed that its Burchett interview position of willingness to talk if we stopped the bombing was in direct response to our own position. Bundy noted that all our statements on the purposes of the bombing had stressed its necessity in order to counter and impede infiltration above all, and had placed its relevance to negotiation in a much broader context than Zinchuk's summary of Hanoi's view would suggest. . . .

. . . .

12. As between these two approaches, Bundy said we saw some advantage in the latter. He pointed out that to take a dramatic series of actions envisaged in the London proposal would inevitably create a glare of publicity that might be unfavorable for subsequent talks. Was it not then wiser to talk quietly so that we knew the outlines of where we might come out before dramatic and visible actions were taken.

13. Zinchuk noted both these avenues, but went on to say that within the last 2-3 days the Soviets had had a firm communication from Hanoi to the effect that they simply could not talk in any fashion as long as the bombing

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was not stopped. Zinchuk argued--in the only faintly coluratura passage of the whole exchange--that Hanoi felt very strongly that it was inherently unequal for two competent nations to talk while one was hitting the other's territory but the other, by force of circumstances, was not hitting the first. Hanoi felt that to talk in these circumstances had the flavor of capitulation. . . .

14. Bundy then asked whether Hanoi's message to the Soviets had conveyed any suggestion that Hanoi was displeased with the Soviet handling in London. In blunt terms, had the Soviets lost credit in Hanoi? Zinchuk promptly and apparently frankly replied that this had not repeat not been the case--that on the contrary Hanoi continued to look to the Soviets to arrange a settlement that would protect their interests, and the Soviet standing had progressively increased in Hanoi over the past several months. He cited the fact that Hanoi had kept the Soviets fully informed on the direct US channel, and said that this showed Hanoi's desire to deal with and through the Soviets.

15. Bundy then asked whether the change of tenses between the British version of our proposal and our own final version had in any way thrown the Soviets off: he noted that our letter to Ho had used the "has stopped" language, so that we did not repeat not suppose Hanoi had been misled. He explained that our reason for this language was our belief that two or three DRV divisions were poised just north of the DMZ and might have been moved into South Viet-Nam before the cessation of infiltration went into force. Zinchuk expressed no surprise at this explanation, and said frankly that the change of tenses had not significantly disturbed the Soviets

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17. Bundy then said that it seemed to us barely conceivable that Hanoi would conclude that we now had in mind some sharp change in our military operations or even some change in our objective vis-a-vis North Viet-Nam. While making clear that he could not exclude some additional actions on our part, Bundy said that he hoped Hanoi had no such view, since the US continued to have no intention of destroying North Viet-Nam or changing its path of action in any drastic fashion. . . .

18. the conversation moved to China. Bundy said that we had no clear view, even among ourselves, as to whether a Mao or a Party victory would be better from our standpoint,

. . . .

21. Bundy's dominant impression was that it underscored increasing Soviet concern to find a Viet-Nam settlement and their belief that they had increasingly strong standing with Hanoi to achieve this. Zinchuk also remarked at one point that a "solid group" in the Hanoi leadership now really wanted peace. . . .

KATZENBACH (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

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STATE 140121 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, 17 Feb 67.

Buenos Aires for Secretary only repeat only

Ref: State 139631

1. In your conversation with Kosygin tomorrow, you should raise the subject of Vietnam.

2. For your own information, you should know that the situation will be reviewed here next week in an effort to assess where we are and what actions, political and military, seem most desirable. We will be considering a wide range of proposals, including significant additional actions against North Vietnam. These could include new targets for aerial bombardment such as power stations, cement plant, etc., and mining of inland waterways and Haiphong harbor. Some targets could be within 10-mile radius of Hanoi. Accordingly, nothing that you say to Kosygin should be open to interpretation which would foreclose any of these options.

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4. Since there was no response from Hanoi to 10-mile radius, we have not for some time regarded our prior statements in this connection as limitation on our freedom of action, although we have not in fact bombed within the radius.

5. . . . you will note para 15 reftel dealing with change of tenses, and same para dealing with position of 2 - 3 DRV divisions

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KATZENBACH (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

February 18, 1967

MOSCOW 3562 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1737, 18 Feb; Rec'd 2108, 18 Feb.

1. I broached Vietnam by saying we had had a very direct and negative reply to what we believed was reasonable proposal. We did not know if other side had been serious in starting discussions in first place In any event, people in Washington were pleased to see indication that USSR also wanted to see problem settled. I said I did not know where we should go from here

2. I then pointed out that during 4 or 5 day Tet holiday and estimated 25,000 tons of supplies had been sent southward, i.e., as many supplies had been shipped in 4 or 5 days as normally had been sent in a month. Thus we wondered what the purpose of this exercise was

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3. Kosygin said he wished make it clear he not authorized negotiate for North Vietnam and therefore could not say his remarks would represent Vietnamese point of view. He did not wish to mislead us. However, he could state his own views. His estimate of latest events was as follows: Vietnamese had for first time stated they ready negotiate if bombings were stopped unconditionally; this was first time they had done so and it was a public statement. When he came to England, he supported this proposal publicly. He did it because he had good reason for taking such a step. Although he believed that mediators in this situation either complicated the problem or merely pretended they doing something, he took that step because he had seen a basis for US-Vietnamese talks. Wilson had been in touch with Washington but not on his, Kosygin's initiative. However, Wilson kept him informed and he was in touch with Hanoi. Then came latest message, which had nature of ultimatum. It said that if by such and such time, i.e., ten o'clock, Hanoi failed to do certain things, bombings would resume. Time given to Hanoi was very short--just a few hours--and situation was even more complicated because of time difference between London and Hanoi. Thus there was no opportunity for Hanoi to consider message and conduct necessary consultations. In fact, US received Ho Chi Minh's reply after bombings had already resumed. Kosygin continued that in his view US had made basic mistake. First, nothing would have happened if US had delayed bombings another three or four days. Second, US had couched its message in terms of an ultimatum. Third, US talked about 25,000 tons going to South--nature of which he did not know--but US said nothing about its own reinforcements. During that period US had sent additional troops, had moved its naval vessels to North Vietnamese shores, and had increased number its aircraft carriers in area from three to five. US accusing other side of having sent 25,000 tons but US itself probably sent as much as 100,000 tons. In other words, US seems believe its infiltration is all right but infiltration by other side is not. Thus other side has no confidence in US intentions. Moreover, US seems discount China, which grave error. China wants continuation and expansion of conflict. In this connection, he wished point out that his remarks in London that negotiations should take place had provoked fury in China. This was another proof of his step having been a deliberate and responsible one. Yet what he received from US was message that bombings would be resumed if something wasn't done by 10 o'clock. If US wanted to conduct bombings it was of course its own decision. Kosygin then said that he had also advanced that thought that infiltration by both sides should cease. He repeated that he did not understand how US could object to infiltration from North while continuing its own infiltration. After all, Vietnam was one country and Vietnamese were one people, whereas US infiltration was of interventionist character.

4. After reiterating that he not authorized represent Vietnamese views and that his remarks reflected only Soviet views, Kosygin said Soviets not confident US proposal had been very serious. Confidence was most important in this situation. While it perhaps inadvisable to rake up history, he wished recall that he, Chairman of USSR Council of Ministers, had been in

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Hanoi when US started bombings. Why did not US turn to him at that time and explain to him its problems? Another example of this need for confidence was fact that despite fact US and USSR had reached understanding to reduce their military expenditures US raised its budget without informing USSR. As for USSR, it kept its word; in any event, if it had deemed necessary to take certain steps it would have informed other side.

5. US was helping those forces by its actions; US left USSR open vis-a-vis China, it also left North Vietnam open vis-a-vis China. Net result is that Chinese view has triumphed, and Chinese can now say that all those efforts were nothing but a masquerade. Thus problem was now to find way toward unconditional cessation of bombings so as to start negotiations. He wished to stress, however, that question was only of direct US-North Vietnam contact, for North Vietnam's prestige was involved here. In addition, he wanted to say frankly that no third party must seek gain advantage from its activities in this situation; much more important thing was a stake here, i.e., search for peaceful settlement. As to how to proceed further, he did not know. Road he had conceived of had been disrupted by US ultimatum. Chinese now very happy for they seek increased tension and hope for US-Soviet confrontation. US assisting them and this alarming to USSR. Kosygin said he could not venture to propose anything constructive now. He had no basis for doing so and he did not wish to make unrealistic propositions. He had spoken very frankly with me-- as he would have not spoken with anyone else--because he knew that I would transmit his views only to President.

5.(sic). After thanking Kosygin for his comments, I said I wished to make a few remarks of my own. I said I did not believe it justified compare other side's infiltration with sending of our own reinforcements. For one thing, we were in South Vietnam at request SVN Govt. Moreover, our bombings were for purpose of impeding North Vietnamese supplies to South, whereas North Vietnamese could not stop our own supplies. Thus stopping of our bombings gave advantage to North Vietnamese.

6. Kosygin interjected that this interesting reasoning, after all, NLF--which certainly more solid organization than US puppets in Saigon and which controlled three fourths of SVN territory--also asking North Vietnam for support.

7. I continued we had told North Vietnam that if they stopped infiltration we would stop our reinforcements. Important point here was that North Vietnam should not gain any advantage.

8. Kosygin again interrupted by asserting US was talking from position of strength.

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11. I said if in face certain US steps, such as restriction

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of bombings around Hanoi, other side continued killing people, including Americans, in South, US would feel free take any action necessary to stop infiltration

12. . . . Kosygin said US must realize its bombings, defoliation, operations, etc., not successful. Thus US must look for constructive steps. US must realize North Vietnam between hammer and anvil. It must look forward and also look back, for Chinese want to heat up situation. This was why he had made his statement in London. In fact, he could tell me that even earlier USSR had sought a political settlement. China, which strictly nationalistic, was expansionist aspirations in Asia, including such countries as India, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, etc. Thus US must keep this in mind--it must take account of these sharp corners in international situation. He continued that he knew that objectively we would agree there was no Saigon Govt even though we would of course never admit that. Saigon regime was sitting on island surrounded by sea of civil war. Its situation could be compared to that of Kolchak or Denikin during Russian civil war. . . . Of course, there was internal dissent in US over this problem. There were Goldwaters and Nixons in US, but he was confident that they would not be supported by US people if a settlement were reached. He said he wished repeat that what should be looked for were constructive steps, certainly not ultimata: US should not send messages stating that something should be done by ten o'clock for it would receive reply that would make it necessary start all over again

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14. . . . he wished to stress that USSR favored political rather than military solution. He emphasized, however, that this statement was strictly private and not for publication. . . . Referring again to message he had transmitted to Hanoi from London, he said he knew it was hopeless the minute he had read it.

15. As Kosygin indicated he wished break off discussion on Vietnam, I raised another subject, leased line for our Embassy. However, after my initial remarks on this subject, Kosygin apologized and said he wished ask me a question relating to Vietnam. He then asked me directly if Chinese had approached US re possibility of negotiations on Vietnam. When I said that to best of my knowledge they had not, he asked me if I was absolutely certain, noting that perhaps there were channels with which I not familiar. I told him I had seen all reports of our conversations with Chinese in Warsaw and could tell him that they did not amount to anything; they consisted essentially of constant Chinese accusations of US for helping Taiwan, having aggressive designs, etc.

16. Discussion then turned to leased line (septel).

THOMPSON

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February 19, 1967

MOSCOW 3568 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1330, 19 Feb; Rec'd 1334, 19 Feb.

Ref: State 140121

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2. So far as our bombing is concerned, . . . I hope that following will be taken into consideration. Kosygin made quite a point of the shift in the Soviet position which he had publicly made clear in London. British Ambassador thinks Kosygin probably went considerably beyond anything that had been agreed upon before he left Moscow and he is concerned that Kosygin may be in some trouble with his colleagues. Any early escalation of our bombing pattern will make more difficult his getting support within the Soviet regime as well as any pressure Soviets may be willing to bring on Hanoi to work for a political settlement.

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4. Mining of Haiphong Harbor would provoke a strong reaction here and Soviets would certainly relate it to their relations with China. Kosygin's startling question to me about China shows depth of their suspicions. (I hope Dept can put me in position to give categoric answer should occasion arise.) They would consider that we are quite willing to make North Vietnam entirely dependent upon ChiComs with all which that would imply.

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8. Only explanation I can think of for Kosygin's question about China is that he may have thought Chinese encouraged US to start negotiations knowing they would fail and that this would lead to actions increasing likelihood of U.S.-Soviet confrontation. Might also be related to possibility that he was personally led to go out on a limb. . . .

THOMPSON

STATE 140351 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, Sent 2002, 19 Feb.

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3. . . . , you should know that Soviet people here and in New York have been nosing around quite a bit about our attitude toward Communist China, and at lower levels have expressed to private contacts suspicion (though possibly for bait) that we were dealing covertly with Peking. Bundy mentioned this to Zinchuk in lunch talk Friday, and said in casual fashion that Soviets could hardly think we had capacity for such dealing even if we wanted them. However, this falls short of clear negativity you now suggest, which we shall consider further for possible additional talk by you with Kosygin.

4. it surprised us Sunday, and continues to surprise us, that Kosygin agreed to forward the Sunday proposal without making the ultimatum objection to it, and this might fit with your conjecture that

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he went out on a limb even with his colleagues.

KATZENBACH (Drafted by W. P. Bundy).

February 20, 1967

MOSCOW 3570 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 0920, 20 Feb; Rec'd 1009, 20 Feb.

Ref: State 140351

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2. My guess is that for the moment Soviets will do nothing except perhaps to express their disappointment to Hanoi and possibly take their time in sending by sea any Soviet supplies that Chinese may have delayed or prevented from going to rail or failed to supply themselves

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THOMPSON

February 22, 1967

New York Times, 23, 24 February

In a conversation with New York Times' reporters on February 22, MAI VAN BO said the recent Trinh statement on the possibility of negotiations was an important gesture of good will toward the United States. He repeated over and over again that the halt of US bombing had to be "permanent and unconditional" because any cessation which was not clearly labeled "permanent and unconditional" would leave the "threat of bombing" intact and thus would constitute an unacceptable interference with the negotiations. Asked how a distinction could be made between a temporary and a permanent halt to bombing, he replied the US would have to declare at the outset that the halt was "permanent and unconditional." Bo said the Trinh offer constituted a basic change in DRV policy and added that the US demonstrated bad faith in its response. He said the four points were "the most correct" solution to the Vietnam problem, and that the DRV regarded the NFLSV as the only "authentic representative" of the South Vietnamese people; thus peace could only come about if the US settled South Vietnamese problems with the Front. In a speech on February 24, Cambodia's Prince SIHANOUK stated Mai Van Bo had asked him to clarify that "the only condition the DRV poses for eventual conversations between North Vietnam and the United States is a definitive and unconditional cessation of bombing of North Vietnam, because the North Vietnamese will not talk under duress. As for the American demand for reciprocity in de-escalation, Mai Van Bo gave me the following explanation: 'it would be impossible for the Government of Hanoi to stop helping and aiding its brothers in the South who must liberate

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themselves from invasion and American occupation.'"

During a television interview on February 22, AMBASSADOR HARRIMAN said "there's some indication that they're (Hanoi) coming around to a point where they may be willing to talk, and it looks at the moment as if it's more apt to be private discussions rather than something that would be public." Asked whether the US would be prepared to accept the Front as an equal in negotiations, he replied that should there be a formal public peace conference, "we will not, of course, accept them as a government" but "they could come with Hanoi."

In late February, Hanoi protested to the ICC about US artillery bombardment across the DMZ (called a "new and extremely serious step of war escalation"); on 1 March, Nhan Dan termed the Viet Cong attacks on Danang and movements of (North Vietnamese) guns south of the DMZ as "reasonable reciprocity" for the new escalation steps taken by the U.S. The NLFSV representative to the DRV (28 February) called the "Johnson clique's" talk of peace a "mere hoax" and said the real US aim was to "cling to South Vietnam at any cost and perpetually partition Vietnam."

The New York Times, Thursday, February 23, 1967

HANOI OFFERS ANEW TO JOIN U.S. IN TALKS IF BOMBING IS ENDED, by Henry Tanner
(Special to The New York Times)

PARIS, Feb. 22 - A spokesman for Hanoi reaffirmed today its offer to enter into talks with the United States if American bombing attacks against North Vietnam were unconditionally and permanently halted.

Mai Van Bo, the North Vietnamese representative in Paris, indicated that his Government's position on this point had not changed in spite of the resumption of American bombing Feb. 14 following a six-day suspension.

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Before his statement, there had been widespread speculation for several days that the North Vietnamese position had hardened after the resumption of the bombings and the failure of the mediation attempted in London by Prime Minister Wilson and the Soviet Premier, Aleksei N. Kosygin.

The principal reason for this speculation was a message from President Ho Chi Minh to Pope Paul VI on Feb. 13 restating Hanoi's four-point demands, including withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam.

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President Ho Chi Minh, in his message to the Pope, phrased the demands as follows:

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"The U.S. imperialists must put an end to their aggression in Vietnam, end unconditionally and definitively the bombing and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, withdraw from South Vietnam all American and satellite troops, recognize the South Vietnam National Liberation Front and let the Vietnamese people themselves settle their own affairs."

Mr. Bo said today that the President's message had referred to the terms of a settlement and not to the process of getting peace talks started. Therefore, he added, it did not constitute a change in the Vietnamese position.

Mr. Bo repeated over and over that the halt of American bombing had to be "permanent and unconditional."

He said the North Vietnamese would not talk "under bombs" or "the threat of bombs." He said that any cessation of bombing that was not clearly labeled "permanent and unconditional" would leave the "threat of bombing" intact and thus would constitute an unacceptable interference with the negotiation.

Asked how a distinction could be made between a temporary and a permanent halt to bombing, he answered that the United States would have to declare at the outset that the halt was "permanent and unconditional."

Mr. Bo said that Hguyen Duy Trinh, the North Vietnamese Foreign Minister, made an important gesture of goodwill toward the United States in late January when he told Wilfred Burchett, an Australian correspondent, that talks between Washington and Hanoi would be possible if the bombing stopped.

The North Vietnamese representative said that that had constituted a basic change in Hanoi's position. Earlier, he said his government's stand was that if the United States stopped bombing unconditionally, this new fact would be studied and that, if Washington then proposed to negotiate, this proposal also would be studied.

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He asserted that neither President Johnson nor Secretary of State Dean Rusk had ever quoted Mr. Trinh's statement fully or accurately.

This, he added, was proof of bad faith since Hanoi's real position was fully known and understood in Washington.

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He made it clear that this was a "conversation" and not an "interview." He said that for an interview he would have insisted on written questions and would have given written answers. He asked that his remarks be reported fairly and correctly.

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Mr. Bo indicated, but did not specifically say, that the four point program of Hanoi was subject to negotiation once United States-North Vietnamese talks had started.

When asked whether the four points constituted absolute terms for a settlement or whether a compromise might be possible, he answered that he could not say what would happen in any talks since no talks were now taking place.

Mr. Bo called the four points "the most correct" solution. Asked whether this could be translated into English as "the best" solution, he said "no."

It is "the most correct" solution, he declared, because it would assure the North Vietnamese people the full exercise of their national rights, real independence and lasting peace.

Mr. Bo was asked about the third of the four points, which calls for the settlement of the affairs of South Vietnam according to the program of the National Liberation Front.

He said that the North Vietnamese Government regarded the National Liberation Front as the only "authentic representative" of the South Vietnamese people.

He said the program of the front was to give South Vietnam independence, democracy, peace and neutrality. He added that Hanoi supported this program and regarded all the problems of South Vietnam as the sole concern of the front.

Therefore, he stated, there could be peace only if the United States settled South Vietnamese problems with the front.

. . . .

February 23, 1967

JCS 6957 (to CINCPAC; info COMUSMACV), TS/LIMDIS.

Subj: Employment of Artillery Fire

1. You are authorized to conduct artillery fire from positions in SVN against valid military targets in Laos, in the DMZ both north and south of demarcation line, and in NVN north of DMZ.

2. State concurs.

C. M. Gettys, Brig. Gen., USA
(Drafted by VAdm Mustin, USN, Dir, J-3)

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MOSCOW 3622 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1520, 23 Feb; Rec'd 1735, 23 Feb.

Ref: Moscow 3568

1. At no point did Kosygin mention necessity of US withdrawal. This may not be particularly significant in view my having mentioned our public declaration of willingness withdraw under certain conditions, but it is interesting when taken in connection with his admonition we must not discount Communist China and its expansionist ambitions in Asia, and more particularly his list of countries against which, he said, China harbors such ambitions. With exception India, all countries he mentioned have security arrangement with us.

2. Kosygin's statement that we disagreed on whether there were one or two Vietnams appears a step backward.

3. I believe this is not the first time Kosygin has mentioned that we started bombing North Vietnam without consulting him when he was in Hanoi. He brought this up in context of importance of mutual confidence. Implication is however that had we consulted him, Soviet Union would at that time have been willing to do something about North Vietnamese intervention in South. It might also indicate that purpose of Kosygin's visit at that time was to damp down situation that was developing there.

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THOMPSON

February 24, 1967

STATE 143101 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, Sent 1530, 24 Feb 67.

Secretary saw Dobrynin February 23 to discuss Viet-Nam.

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4. Hanoi had our 14 points, the Lewandowski 10-point draft, and at an earlier time we had proposed a possible revision of Hanoi's third point along the lines of paragraph 5 of the Lewandowski draft. With such formulations, we could either start by stages of action, or could "go to the end and work back." For example, the Secretary noted that Kosygin in London had expressed concern about the fate of the men fighting in the South if our London proposal had been accepted (calling for an end to infiltration of supplies as well as men). To deal with this problem, it might be possible to work out amnesty arrangements for the southerners fighting in the South and safe conduct for the northerners to return home, although we recognized that Hanoi might not wish to admit the presence of the latter.

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5. The Secretary wondered whether there might be some significance in the fact that Ho did not make his reply to the President public; did this mean that Hanoi's rejection of continued talks might not be final? Dobrynin said he saw no connection. . . .

6. The DRV Charge had given the Soviets the message that Hanoi felt that our resumption of bombing meant we were not repeat not interested in talks. Therefore, Hanoi was breaking off the Moscow channel

7. The Secretary then said that it was out of the question for us to stop bombing and see a completely new military situation develop without knowing at all what talks would produce. Dobrynin responded that we could try and asked what would we lose. . . .

. . . .

9. The Secretary reiterated that there were very important military considerations behind our position, and noted the massive re-supply that Hanoi had made during the TET period. Dobrynin objected that the US too had re-supplied its forces. He said that this really could not be the major point behind the US position, and that there must be something more (this presumably implying that the US was really resolved to get a military solution). The Secretary quickly rejoined that we drew a distinction between our activity in support of South Viet-Nam and North Viet-Nam activity against South Viet-Nam. Dobrynin said that the Soviets likewise made a distinction, but not the same one we did. He added that our disagreement on this had been fully discussed and further discussion would not lead anywhere.

. . . .

12. Dobrynin responded that Hanoi's objection to talking unless the bombing stopped was a major difficulty and a real one. He then recounted that on the 15th (apparently of December) the DRV Charge had come to the Soviet Foreign Ministry to tell the Soviets that they had told Rapacki to break off his talks with us, on the ground that the US bombing just before that date meant the US thought it could pressure Hanoi to talk, and this they would not do.

13. Dobrynin then went on that Hanoi (and by implication the Soviets as well) took an unfavorable view of our refusal to accept the 7-day TET truce period proposed by Hanoi. The Secretary said that we were bound to be influenced by how they would have used the longer period. Dobrynin argued that nonetheless the impression was left that the US wished a military solution and not talks. He noted that Hanoi was angry on this point as well

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15. The Secretary then noted that Hanoi would not even tell us what the three divisions just north of the DMZ would do if the bombing stopped. Dobrynin queried whether the divisions were not fully north of the DMZ, and the Secretary responded that some elements were south of the DMZ, some were in the DMZ and some to the north.

. . . .

17. The Secretary then asked whether the appointment of a new DRV Ambassador in Moscow might make a difference to Hanoi's willingness to talk in some fashion. Dobrynin said that of course an Ambassador would have more authority than a Charge, but the decisions would still be made in Hanoi and an Ambassador would be acting under instructions. . . .

18. The Secretary then noted that Ho's message to the Pope really asked for capitulation and US withdrawal. Similarly, Mai Van Bo appeared to be referring again to our recognizing the NLF as the sole legitimate representative of the South. . . .

. . . .

21. The Secretary concluded that we continue to wish to stay closely in touch with the Soviets. He noted that there had once been a time when it had seemed clear that the Soviets did not wish to discuss the problem with us, referring to his talk with Kosygin in New Delhi. Dobrynin agreed. Now, it seemed clear that the Soviets were prepared to discuss the matter with us, and perhaps it would have helped if we had been in touch with them on one or two specific occasions. The Secretary emphasized that we really did wish to see the conflict finished, and noted that a general feeling of impatience was our real problem, not the views expressed by such people as Senator Fulbright. If the other side kept up and increased its military activities, as it appeared to be doing, it was inevitable that we ourselves would take action.

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

February 25, 1967

LONDON 6893 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Sent 1348, 25 Feb; Rec'd 1539, 25 Feb.

. . . .

2. Rostow read substance of STATE 143029 and explained background which led to Presidential decision to undertake this new series of actions. Brown took news calmly and left room to call Prime Minister so that he would not hear about artillery bombardment across DMZ over radio. Brown observed that since Kosygin departure, Vietnam issue had quieted down

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in UK, but he thought this new action would be interpreted as "escalation" and could stir people up again -- not just left wingers, but also "soft" groups and elements in the center of Labor's political spectrum.

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4. Rostow also stated that the Russians now feel that negotiations will not come about through intercession of a mediator, but rather through direct contact between Hanoi and Washington. Rostow reminded Brown that the American Government and the American people were very conscious of the Korean experience when negotiations were carried on for two years while the fighting continued. During the two-year period, American casualties more than doubled. We were determined to prevent that from happening again in Viet-Nam. Brown said in reply to this point that the important thing about Korea was that negotiations were going on. "Fighting while negotiations were taking place was preferable to fighting without negotiations."

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KAISER

March 1, 1967

LONDON 6998 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1656, 1 Mar; Rec'd 1830, 1 Mar.

1. Viet Nam was subject of two conversations with Rapacki during London visit. On first day (22nd) Thomson got strong impression Rapacki felt he had taken a personal risk in December project, had gotten burned,

2. Rapacki version to Brown of December events was that after firm agreement on original 10-point package, Lodge had consulted Washington and then reneged by raising new (unspecified) questions and points of interpretation. Before the Poles had chance to do anything with these the December 13-14 bombings occurred, killing entire project.

3. Rapacki's general attitude was illustrated by two minor exchanges. When Brown asked Rapacki's judgment on degree of Kosygin's quote authority unqte in Hanoi Rapacki replied quote not less than yours unquote and when Brown asked what country had more influence in Hanoi, China or Russia, Rapacki replied quote North Viet Nam unquote.

4. In luncheon conversation between PM and Rapacki on 23rd Wilson opened with question of how the quote misunderstanding unquote of November-December arose, observing that Lewandowski in Hanoi must have gone beyond what Lodge had said. Rapacki replied vehemently that no misunderstanding was possible. Lewandowski had gotten Lodge's approval of his written version

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of what Lodge had said. Only problem was bombing of Hanoi just before Warsaw talks of two principals scheduled to begin. In response to Wilson's question as to why things went wrong, Rapacki quote hinted unquote that sabotage by quote Saigon hawks unquote was responsible, referring again to December 13-14 bombings. When Wilson suggested failure of quote human communication unquote Rapacki again insisted there had been no misunderstanding or inaccuracy in transmission of messages.

5. On Wilson's suggestion, Rapacki agreed a more detailed post mortem between British and Poles on the December affair would be useful. The British Embassy Warsaw had subsequently been informed Poles will give them a more detailed account of their version, though how specific and whether in writing is not clear. UK Ambassador Brimelow, who not well informed on Viet Nam issue, has been instructed only to listen and not talk.

6. When Wilson referred to Harriman talks in Warsaw a year ago re possibility of misunderstanding Rapacki was equally categoric in insisting there had been no misunderstanding or garble of Harriman suggestions declaring he had personally initialed written record of Harriman talks.

7. Rapacki argued that Hanoi policy is not made in Peking but that as long as US bombing continues North Viet Nam has quote no liberty of either action or speech and unable to divulge its views even to its closest friends. Unquote. While taking usual hard line that cessation of bombing is essential pre-condition for any progress, Rapacki gave no hint of what might happen if bombing stopped. But he declared that if bombing continues, scale of hostilities will grow, and US will find itself involved in Laos, possibility also in Cambodia, Thailand and directly in North Viet Nam. He argued Chinese could not permit North Viet Nam to collapse and Soviets would not permit China to collapse.

KAISER

March 4, 1967

MOSCOW 3756 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 0930, 4 Mar; Rec'd 1204, 4 Mar.

. . . .

2. Yesterday when discussing China with Kuznetsov he jokingly stated we should be well informed in view of our several hundred secret talks with Chicoms. A number of my diplomatic colleagues have mentioned Soviet suspicions of our relations with Chinese.

THOMPSON

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STATE 149089 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, 4 Mar 67.

You are hereby authorized at your discretion to deny flatly that we had any approach from the Chicoms on negotiations with North Vietnam.

RUSK (Drafted by J. P. Walsh)

March 11, 1967

STATE 153528 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, Sent 0123, 12 March.

Ref: Moscow's 3501

1. We have transmitted to you USUN's 4318 in which Kulebiakin expressed view to Buffum and Finger that now is good time for talks between US and North Vietnam and that these could take place without stoppage of bombing. Moreover, fact that new DRV Ambassador Nguyen Tho Chan, has presented his credentials provides opportunity to try to establish the direct line of communications between Ambassadors to which we had hoped the Guthrie-LeChang talks would lead. We realize that Le Chang's February 15 statement appears to close door on further conversations and Ho's message seems adamant on ruling out talks while bombing continues. Nevertheless, in earlier Guthrie-Le Chang conversations it seemed implicit that they were going through exercise which might be regarded as preparatory to direct contacts at Ambassadorial level when DRV Ambassador arrived on scene and Kulebiakin in NY has specifically suggested level of talks in Moscow should be raised. Therefore, request you seek meeting with Chan and make following points:

2. Basic message we would like to convey to Hanoi via Ambassador Chan is that we continue to favor prompt peaceful settlement and we remain persuaded that the shortest road is through direct talks between our representatives. Would not appear from record that we and DRV disagree on this point but rather that we have been unable to find way of moving toward talks.

3. You should point out that in the President's press conference of March 9 the President said in answer to a question with respect to Quote reciprocal action Unquote that he would be ready to entertain Quote just almost any reciprocal action on the part of North Vietnam . . . We are prepared to discuss anything they are willing to discuss. Unquote.

4. FYI We recognize that the new DRV Ambassador is probably under instructions not to establish contact with you at this time. Thus even if he provides an opportunity for a brief call, he is likely to reiterate the stand the Charge made to Guthrie at their last meeting. We recognize that we have to give the DRV Ambassador enough ammunition to warrant his requesting a change in instructions. For this reason you should emphasize that we are ready now, without preliminaries, to get down to serious substantive and entirely secret discussions on all questions involved in a peaceful settlement itself, in order to bring this matter to a prompt

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conclusion. We will provide further instructions along this line if your initial talk indicates the possibility of establishing a dialogue.

RUSK (Drafted by Unger)

March 13, 1967

MOSCOW 3880 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 0930, 13 Mar, Rec'd 1047, 13 Mar.

Ref: State 153528

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2. In view our recent escalation bombing, this strikes me as a singularly inappropriate time make this approach. It will almost certainly be rebuffed by DRV who will not wish to give appearance of submitting to increased military pressure. More importantly believe our approach at this time will be interpreted by Soviets as cynically timed to insure refusal and merely build up our record of peace efforts. (I am inclined by skeptical Kulebiakin). Moreover, failure arrange discussion now will make more difficult approach at more opportune time. Nevertheless, will endeavor carry our instructions unless cancelled by department.

THOMPSON

STATE 154303 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, 13 Mar 67.

For the Ambassador from the Secretary

Despite your 3880 I believe that you should suggest to the DRV Ambassador that a private talk might be constructive.

As far as recent bombings are concerned, there is very little prospect that we will let up in bombing unless we see some response through private contacts. We have been maintaining the ten nautical mile radius around Hanoi but cannot guarantee to do so indefinitely.

We, too, are inclined to be skeptical about Kulebiakin. The fact that he was accompanied on his second talk by another Russian and his greater detail of suggestion about procedure indicates the possibility that he was in fact acting under instructions.

The immediate result might well be a preemptory refusal by the DRV Ambassador to talk but if he attributes his refusal to our bombing, we might as well follow through and tell him that we are prepared to discuss that problem. Given the potentialities which lie ahead, we are not indifferent to establishing a record if that is all that Hanoi will permit.

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I fully understand the considerations underlying your 3880 but believe you should know that we do not see a better time, so far as bombing is concerned, coming up in the near future unless we see some indication that the other side is prepared to do business.

RUSK (Drafted by D. Rusk)

March 16, 1967

On March 16, Prime Minister Wilson sent a communication to President Johnson (State's 158462, March 20), recalling that he had been worried during the Kosygin visit about a misunderstanding with the USG which had risen. He asked if Pat Dean could see the President around April 1 to discuss this problem and to make sure that there is no question of a similar situation arising in the future. He also asked for confirmation that the message which the President had sent him to hand to Kosygin on the night of February 21 still represents the US position.

MOSCOW 3947 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1350, 16 Mar; Rec'd 1558, 16 Mar.

Ref: State 154303

1. . . . Akalovsky reached Hoang Manh Tu by phone today at 11:45 and conveyed my request for meeting with DRV Ambassador

2. Tu said would check and asked Akalovsky call him again

3. Tu . . . was in his office at 14:45. Said his Ambassador not available "for the moment" and therefore he could give no answer at this time. When asked if this meant answer could be expected later in day, Tu said Ambassador might not be available until Saturday, and suggested Akalovsky call him Saturday morning (March 18).

4. It clear Ambassador Chan asked Hanoi for instructions. Noteworthy fact that, contrary to his past practice of calling back himself, Tu now unwilling do so and asking Akalovsky call him.

THOMPSON

March 17, 1967

STATE 157597 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, Sent 2258, 17 Mar.

Ref: Moscow 3963

. . . , we now see some advantage in delaying your session with the

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DRV Ambassador for several days while developments in connection with the U Thant initiative mature to the point where we know the nature of our own response and perhaps that of Hanoi. Nonetheless, if Akalovsky gets a call on Saturday, March 18, and you have an appointment, the Secretary General's proposal might provide a useful opening gambit. We would suggest that you simply mention that we have gotten the proposal from the Secretary General and you have been informed that Washington is studying it carefully.

FYI. We have strong indications from Saigon that if anything more formal than the kind of talks you might be engaged in in Moscow were to take place the GVN would want to participate.

RUSK (Drafted by C. L. Cooper)

March 21, 1967

MOSCOW 4020 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1134, 21 Mar; Rec'd 1251, 21 Mar.

Ref: State 157597

1. Having delayed contact with DRV Embassy for several days per reftel, I had Akalovsky phone Hoang Manh today , latter said he had been authorized give following response

2. At present, US carrying out every day new steps of grave escalation of aggressive war against people of NVN. At same time, US is mounting a game of contacts with DRV reps in order to deceive world public opinion and to cover its criminal acts of war. In view of this, DRV Ambassador in Moscow cannot receive US Ambassador.

3.

THOMPSON

LONDON 7602 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Rec'd 1020, 21 Mar.

For Walsh to hold for Secy return or relay as desired

Ref: State 158462

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2. . . . in my private talk with Brown last night . . . he made clear that what is still bothering Wilson and him is the change of tenses in the message we gave them on Friday, as compared to the A/B formula and the draft that they had made and of course actually gave the Russians on Friday without our authority.

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3. I told Brown flatly that I was absolutely sure this change of tenses had nothing whatsoever to do with the outcome. . . .

. . . .

5. . . . , Brown asked earnestly whether the President's attitude remained as he had stated it to Brown in October, that he was ready to seize even a 40 percent chance for peace. I did not try to gloss this remark, but did assure him categorically that the President was absolutely determined to follow any road that could lead to peace and that there had been no change whatever in this attitude. I noted that the Bunker appointment placed in Saigon our most experienced field negotiator, and that this was simply another evidence of our position. I do not think this got across, but it is apparent that Wilson and Brown do a lot of churning over the Kosygin visit and may still have some scars from our having given the Phase A/Phase B formula to the Poles in November without telling Brown.

KAISER

March 23, 1967

MOSCOW 4069 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1530, 23 Mar; Rec'd 1811, 23 Mar.

Ref: State 149089

During my call on Gromyko today, I . . . said that my inquiry with Department confirms my response to Kosygin, i.e., that there had been no such suggestions.

THOMPSON

March 24, 1967

STATE 162643 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, Sent 2302, 24 Mar.

Ref: State 143101

In Bundy/Dobrynin conversation on evening March 23, following . . . were highlights:

1. Dobrynin stuck throughout to same basic line as in reftel, that Hanoi simply would not repeat not talk unless we stop the bombing. He repeated argumentation that Hanoi could not possibly accept our insistence on reciprocal action without accepting whole US view of nature of conflict.

. . . .

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2. Conversation then got onto U Thant proposal, as to which Dobrynin had already indicated that Hanoi response would be negative. . . .

3. Bundy then said that Hanoi revelation of letters continued to puzzle us very much, as we had formed clear impression that if Hanoi ever wished to move seriously it would do so in some secret and private manner. Hence we were genuinely distressed that Hanoi had damaged, if not destroyed, privacy of Moscow channel. Dobrynin did not respond directly, and did not take possible occasion to indicate any hope Moscow channel could be resumed. . . .

4. . . . Bundy noted that Hanoi had never responded to our January 20 message, and that this had been one of major negative factors, together with lack of any response to President's letter, that had led us to go ahead with resumption on February 13. He stressed that discussion of January 20 topics need not be described as "talks" but could simply be exploratory "non-conversations." If we were able to arrive at a clear picture of an agreed final settlement, question of more formal talks and even of stopping the bombing might take on different hue. Dobrynin obviously understood the point, but did not respond in any hopeful way.

5. Bundy then remarked that if Hanoi were so insistent that we stop the bombing before any talks could take place, it was hard to suppose that there could have been any substance to what the Poles told us in December about a willingness to meet in Warsaw. Dobrynin shrugged this off with the perhaps revealing remark that Poles had given Soviets an entirely different picture than the one we had presented of who had taken the initiative for the Warsaw contacts and by implication the statement of US position. The inescapable implication was what Poles had represented to Soviets that USG had initiated Lewandowski channel and that USG had either drafted or endorsed Lewandowski formulation and urged that it be presented to Hanoi. Bundy merely said Soviets knew facts as we clearly understood them. In this exchange, Dobrynin returned to theme that our bombing on December 2 and 4 and thrown Rapacki off, and that bombing of December 13-14 had caused clear Hanoi rejection of Warsaw meeting. . . .

6. In commenting on our February 13 resumption, Dobrynin did complain that we had not given additional time for Hanoi response our resumption had given impression in Moscow that USG or some elements in it, were impatient and anxious to press forward with military pressures.

7. Dobrynin expressed hope that there would not be "dramatic developments" in USG actions against NVN. . . .

8. . . . Bundy noted that there now appeared to be at least temporary settling down in cultural revolution, perhaps related to need to concentrate on planting season. Dobrynin expressed strong agreement that latter was key factor, and stated judgment that resumption of struggle highly likely in view of deep-seated views held by Mao personally.

. . . .

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

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April 5, 1967

On April 5, Thompson was instructed to arrange delivery to the DRV mission by the means he deemed best suited to maximize the chances of early transmission to Hanoi of a letter dated April 6 from President Johnson to President Ho Chi Minh (State's 169339). The following points were made in the letter: (1) the President was disappointed that Ho did not feel able to respond positively to his letter of February 8; (2) we remain prepared to talk quietly with Ho's representatives to establish the terms of a peaceful settlement and then bring the fighting to a stop; or we are prepared to undertake steps of mutual deescalation which might make it easier for discussions of a peaceful settlement to take place. Talks could take place in Moscow, Rangoon, or elsewhere; (3) it is clear that we must one day agree to reestablish and make effective the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962; let the people of SVN determine in peace the kind of government they want; let the peoples of North and South Viet-Nam determine peacefully whether and how they should unite; and permit the peoples of SEA to turn all their energies to their economic and social development; (4) the President and Ho will be judged in history by whether they worked to bring about this result sooner rather than later; (5) Ho's views were invited on these matters.

April 6, 1967

MOSCOW 4284 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1353, 6 Apr; Rec'd 1521, 6 Apr.

Ref: State 169339.

1. I had Akalovsky deliver President's message to DRV Embassy today.

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.....

3. While there is good chance letter will be returned, hopefully DRV Embassy will make copy before doing so.

THOMPSON.

MOSCOW 4294 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1645, 6 Apr; Rec'd 1808, 6 Apr.

Ref: Moscow's 1284

President's message returned by DRV Embassy. Original envelope which had been opened, found in Embassy mail box at 1745 and bore following in French: "Non conforme! Retour a l'expediteur."

THOMPSON

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April 10, 1967

STATE 172325 (to Amembassy Moscow), TS/Nodis, 10 Apr.
Info: USDEL PUNIA DEL ESTE
PUNIA: Eyes only for Secretary Rusk
MOSCOW: For Ambassador Thompson Only

Request you seek early appointment with Gromyko to make following points:

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5. A few weeks ago Mr, Kulebiakin of USSR Mission in New York mentioned to a representative of our UN Mission that Mr. Pham Van Dong would soon be in Moscow and suggested that we might wish to contact him there. My Government is ready to establish such a contact

6., you would appreciate Gromyko's reaction to this proposal and most especially any assistance that he could render to facilitate confidential discussions with Mr. Pham Van Dong or members of his party.

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KATZENBACH (Drafted by C. L. Cooper)

April 12, 1967

Dept of State Memorandum of Conversation, 1815 12 Apr 67
Place: Soviet Embassy, Washington, D.C.
Participants: Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy F. Dobrynin
Deputy Under Secretary Foy D. Kohler

During my long luncheon conversation with Ambassador Dobrynin I asked him about the reports of a new agreement between Moscow and Peking to facilitate the transit of Soviet arms aid to North Viet-Nam.

. I said that some of the present interpretations speculated that the new arrangement was a precursor to a considerable increase in the quantity and quality of Soviet arms aid to North Viet-Nam. I hoped that this was not the case because escalation on their side could only add to the pressures for further escalation on our side. He replied that in fact pressures on them to increase their aid resulted from our escalation. He knew that Moscow wanted to avoid any direct conflict with us in Viet-Nam and was sure that care would be exercised. On the other hand, he could not say categorically the Vietnamese were not even now asking for new quantities and forms of arms and that Moscow did not feel under considerable pressure to provide them.

. I was sure the President did not want war to spread or any direct conflict to develop. However, he certainly could not feel

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himself bound to any previous restraints so long as all his attempt to find a way to reduce the intensity of the battle or bring it to a peaceful conclusion had been rejected.

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(Initialed by Kohler)

April 13, 1967

MOSCOW 4378 (to SecState), TS/Nodis, Sent 1300, 13 Apr; Rec'd 1713, 13 Apr.

Ref: State 172325

1. I met with Gromyko ten a.m. today and made presentation along lines reftel.

2. Gromyko said Sovs "of course" could not assume role of intermediary between US and DRV and NLFSV, for reasons explained to US Govt on number of occasions. US should address itself to Vietnamese re any matter it may wish discuss. . . .

3. . . . , Gromyko continued, there are ways of establishing US-DRV contact, and first prerequisite for this is unconditional cessation of bombings. . . .

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6. I pointed out that we prepared have military actions and bombings as priority item for discussion with DRV, and that we also prepared have de-escalation even without any agreement. Yet whenever we had suspended bombings in part, other side had sought to use pause to increase its strength in south. All we want is assurance--not necessarily public--that this would not happen again. . . .

7. Gromyko pointed out US had begun contact with DRV in Warsaw and elsewhere, but they had been stopped by US actions. . . .

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THOMPSON

April 20, 1967

The exchange of views with Brown and his approaching visit to Moscow prompted Thompson to express his views on our negotiation posture (Moscow's 4491). He suggested that we should consider whether in present circumstances

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our continuing campaign of peace moves really serves to further the possibility of peace negotiations. He doubted that further initiatives, insofar as US public opinion is concerned, could be helpful. Insofar as the Soviets are concerned, initiatives that have little chance of success are positively harmful, particularly if we are trying to involve them. In respect to the DRV and NLF our continued peace moves must be counter-productive by suggesting to them that we will not stay the course. On the other hand, Thompson did not think an escalation of bombing was the answer to the problem. He suggested that consideration be given to a Presidential statement listing all our recent moves combined with a resolute declaration that, while we will always be prepared to move to the conference table, we have no course open to us but to step up our operations in SVN and to continue to use our bombers to hold down infiltration from the north. Against this background, Thompson suggested that Brown should convey to the Soviets a sense of our determination to see this affair through rather than making peace noises when he visits Moscow.

April 25, 1967

MOSCOW 4590 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Sent 1030, 25 Apr; Rec'd 1218, 25 Apr.

. . . .

2. Dobrynin remarked that he had known that his government felt strongly about Vietnam but had not realized how strongly until his consultations here.

THOMPSON

BONN 12782 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Sent 2123, 25 Apr; Rec'd 2259, 25 Apr.

For the Acting Secretary from the Secretary

Referring to the last sentence of Moscow's 4590, you might wish to prepare a telegram for Thompson, asking him to have a further talk with Dobrynin to clarify the elementary situation on Viet-Nam. If the Soviet Union is concerned about the fact that a fellow Socialist country is being bombed by the US, there is no quarrel between Washington and Moscow on that point. This bombing could be stopped immediately, as far as we are concerned. If, however, the Soviets are determined to support North Viet-Nam in a seizure of South Viet-Nam by force, we have a major issue with the Soviet Union. As we see it, the Soviet Union does not have sufficient influence in Hanoi to cause Hanoi to take the steps which would result in a complete cessation of US bombing of North Viet-Nam. Perhaps we should try to break through this fundamental policy point with the Soviets so that at least we and they can fully understand exactly where we are.

McGHEE

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May 15, 1967

STATE 194946 (to Amembassy London), TS/Nodis, Sent 0200, 16 May.

For the Ambassador from the Secretary

Please pass the following message from me to Foreign Secretary Brown.

1. QUOTE. Dear George: We welcome your trip to Moscow and wish you well. I would like to pass along some views and a suggestion or two which might be of some use. . . .

. . . .

5. There is one central point which, if clearly accepted by the USSR, could move us a long way toward peace. We are prepared to recognize the interest of the Soviet Union in the safety of a Communist regime in North Viet-Nam. They must recognize our interest, confirmed by treaty, in the safety of South Viet-Nam and the ability of the South Vietnamese to have their own government. Surely, if we and the Soviets recognize each other's important interests here, we ought to find a way to pull North and South Viet-Nam apart militarily.

6. We recognize that our military actions against North Viet-Nam present many problems for the Soviet Government. We are prepared to cease such military actions at any time, but cannot do so without some serious military response on the part of the North Vietnamese

7. Perhaps you could press the Soviets as to what Hanoi's reaction would be under any of the following alternatives:

(a) A combination of our stopping the bombing of North Viet-Nam, their stopping their infiltration and our stopping augmentation of forces. If the Russians have any variant or counterproposal on this formula, we would be glad to take a look at it.

(b) Pulling apart our opposing forces at the DMZ. This would be following up on our offer of April 19 which has been rejected, but which might lead to some countersuggestion on the Russian side.

(c) A partial suspension of bombing such as the 4-month stand-down in over 300 square miles around the center of Hanoi in exchange for some serious gesture of de-escalation in the South. We were disappointed that Hanoi showed no interest in this act of restraint, and no reciprocity, because we are prepared to use this device on an expanding scale as a means of de-escalation.

8. On the military side, we just cannot accept a permanent unconditional cessation of bombing in the North while they continue unabated with their armed assault on the South. The large North Vietnamese forces

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in and on both sides of the DMZ are at this moment heavily engaging our Marines in the border provinces of South Viet-Nam. They are firing artillery from well across the Seventeenth Parallel. We expect a major attack in the Central Highlands from forces now in refuge in Cambodia.

.

9. Another issue that may well arise in your conversations is the matter of Laos. . . . I have long felt that reconvening the 1962 Laos Conference might offer some opportunities for dealing with the problem of South Viet-Nam as well as Laos.

.

12. Good Luck. Dean UNQUOTE

RUSK (Drafted by C. L. Cooper)

May 17, 1967

STATE 196078 (to Amembassy London), TS/Nodis, Sent 2053, 17 May.

Info: Amembassy Moscow

Following message from Foreign Secretary Brown received by Secretary Rusk today transmitted for your information:

QTE My Dear Dean,

.

In my judgment your alternative (b) - separation at the DMZ - is not a starter and I cannot at present see what sort of opportunity there might be to put it. Moreover, as it has already been rejected, I doubt very strongly whether the Russians would want to use it as a basis for any counter-suggestion. We may get to this sort of situation in the end, but not I believe at the present.

This leaves me with (a) and (c). On both of these I really need to know your position in greater depth before I start talking to people in Moscow.

Your (a) is of course a compound of the elements in the package which has had various shapes in the last six months. If your thinking is that all the elements must now be run together, I would judge that this shape of package will have absolutely no attraction for the Russians and that I would serve you ill by exposing it in Moscow. But would I be right in reading from the second sentence of your (a) that if the Russians were to revert to the original package which I put to Gromyko at your suggestion in November, then you would still be in the market with it? If this is the case, I would certainly try hard to put it into a Russian mouth.

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On your (c) - partial suspension of bombing - I really need to know more. First, how would you envisage this developing in terms of a progressive expansion from the Hanoi area? Secondly, what sort of serious de-escalation in the south could you visualize at each stage? Also, what about Haiphong while it is still outside the expanding area? The North Vietnamese now seem to be as sensitive about this place as Hanoi itself.

.

Yours, George, May 16, 1967 UNQTE

RUSK (Drafted by B. H. Read)

May 18, 1967

STATE 196827 (to Amembassy London), TS/Nodis, Sent 1614, 18 May.

Info: Amembassy Moscow

Please deliver following message from Secretary Rusk to Foreign Secretary Brown:

QUOTE: Dear George:

I find it difficult to reply precisely to the questions put in your message of May 16. What we really need is some indication that Hanoi is prepared to talk business.

.

. . . no one has been able to tell us of any military move which North Viet-Nam is prepared to make if we take steps on your side to de-escalate.

.

Is it not really better for you, with a briefcase full of interesting proposals on our side, to explore the situation with the Soviets to find out if there are any points anywhere on which some progress might be made? This you can do on your own responsibility as Co-Chairman.

I hope I do not appear to be unresponsive but I rather feel that until we get some word from the North Vietnamese we are talking in a vacuum - a vacuum created by Hanoi.

With warmest regards, Sincerely, Dean. UNQUOTE.

RUSK (Drafted by D. Rusk)

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September 18, 1967

"Chronology of Viet Peace Efforts," by Chalmers M. Roberts, The Washington Post, 18 September 1967.

The record indicates that the Ashmore-Baggs peace effort ran afoul of a change in American policy which occurred at the moment they were involved in Vietnam diplomacy.

This is the record, as far as it is now known, of the pertinent events:

December 4, 1966 - Poland reported to the United States that North Vietnam was prepared to send a man to Warsaw to meet an American representative and to do so without demanding as a pre-condition an end to the American bombing of the North.

American officials subsequently contended that independent checks showed this to be a Polish view, not that of North Vietnam.

December 13-14, 1966 - American planes raid near Hanoi. Poland later privately blamed the raids for ending chances for a meeting. After the raids Hanoi began to stress the demand that bombing must cease unconditionally before there could be talks.

December 26 - January 6, 1967 - Harrison Salisbury of the New York Times created a furor over dispatches from Hanoi picturing civilian destruction from the American raids. Officials here said Hanoi had let Salisbury in as part of a campaign to force an end to the bombing. Ashmore and Baggs arrived in Hanoi the day Salisbury left.

January 12, 1967 - Ashmore and Baggs met Ho Chi Minh who stressed an end to the bombing. Ashmore now writes that "we had not brought back" from this interview "any hard proposal" from Ho "beyond the reiteration of his unqualified commitment to enter into negotiations" if the U.S. halted the bombing.

Ashmore reported to State Department officials that he and Baggs felt that "Ho seemed prepared to consider a specific proposal based on a formula of mutual de-escalation" of the fighting.

Early January to early February -- The United States secretly sent four memoranda to Hanoi describing, officials say, possible methods of deescalation. These messages, yet to be made public were handed by an American embassy official in Moscow to a North Vietnamese representative.

January 27, 1967 - Hanoi's man in Moscow gave a reply to the American official. Later the State Department described the reply as "a diatribe against the United States."

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January 28, 1967 - North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh in an interview with Australian Communist journalist Wilfred Burchett said that "it is only after the unconditional cessation of U.S. bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV (North Vietnam) that there could be talks between the DRV and the U.S."

February 2, 1967 - President Johnson prepared a letter to Ho in which he took up the Burchett interview points. Mr. Johnson said he would "order a cessation of bombing" and also halt "further augmentation of U.S. forces in South Vietnam as soon as I am assured that infiltration into South Vietnam by land and sea has stopped." These "acts of restraint," he said, "would make possible serious private discussions." This letter, however, was not turned over to Hanoi's man in Moscow until Feb. 8 and the delay has never been explained.

February 4, 1967 - Ashmore and Baggs met at the State Department with Undersecretary Nicholas deB. Katzenbach and other top officials but not including Secretary Dean Rusk.

A letter from Ashmore to Ho was drafted with Assistant Secretary William P. Bundy, whose area includes Vietnam, as the chief department draftsman.

The key sentence in the letter stated that "senior officials" at State "expressed opinion that some reciprocal restraint" was necessary along with a halt to the bombing and an end to the influx of American troops if talks were to take place.

February 5, 1967 - The draft letter was delivered to Ashmore at Fulbright's house. Ashmore mailed it that afternoon. The letter did not specify the "reciprocal restraint" although the President's letter of three days earlier had specified an end to North Vietnamese infiltration into the South.

In addition, on the day (Feb. 2) the Administration said the Presidential letter was drafted, Mr. Johnson told a press conference that "just almost any step" would be a suitable response from Hanoi. He also had said that "we would be glad to explore any reciprocal action." Sometime between Feb. 2 and 9 the official American terms were hardened.

February 8, 1967 - Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin, who was in London Feb. 6-12, said at a press conference that the Trinh interview with Burchett "boils down" to saying that if the U.S. unconditionally stopped the bombing, "then it would be possible" to open talks. Kosygin thus publicly changed Trinh's crucial word "could" into "would." He was never contradicted by Hanoi on this. Furthermore, Kosygin passed the word to Washington, which had inquired as to when talks would begin, that they could start in three or four weeks.

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February 9, 1967 - Secretary Rusk at a press conference which had been announced by the White House, said that "for some time now there has been evident a systematic campaign by the Communist side to bring about an unconditional and permanent cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam without any corresponding military action on their side, in exchange for the possibility of talks -- talks which are thus far formless and without content."

Rusk also distinguished between a "pause in the bombing" (here he seemed to indicate he would agree to a pause in exchange for talks) and a "permanent cessation." For the latter to take place, he said, "we must know the military consequences." The U.S., he said, cannot stop the bombing without reciprocity for that would be "closing off one-half of the war while the rest of it goes on full force."

In short, Rusk was surfacing the central point of the President's letter to Ho, the contents of which were not made public until Hanoi broadcast it March 21.

February 10, 1967 - Ho said he received the Johnson letter on this day. Ashmore assumes it arrived before his own letter with the less specific request on the point of reciprocity.

During this period, February 8-14, there was a pause in the bombing over the Tet holiday in Vietnam, including a Presidentially ordered short extension.

February 13, 1967 - Ho in a letter to Pope Paul VI assailed the U.S. He coupled an unconditional end to the bombing with the withdrawal of American forces and the recognition of the National Liberation Front, the political arm of the Vietcong. In Washington this was taken as a reply to the President. Resumption of the bombing was ordered.

February 15, 1967 - Ho replied to the President in words similar to the Pope. "A little later," writes Ashmore, he and Baggs received a reply to the Ashmore letter saying there did not seem to be any point to their making a second visit to Hanoi.

September 18, 1967

"Text of State Department Comment on Peace Feeler," The New York Times, Sept. 18, 1967.

WASHINGTON, Sept. 18 - Following is the text of a statement issued by the State Department today regarding a report that President Johnson had undermined a peace approach to North Vietnam:

We have had a number of inquiries concerning news stories published today, based on an article by Mr. Harry Ashmore in a publication of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions (C.S.D.I.).

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The facts concerning the department's contacts with Messrs. Ashmore and Baggs [William C. Baggs, editor of The Miami News] are as follows:

(1) During the summer of 1966, Mr. William Baggs told the department that C.S.D.I. was planning a major conference in May of 1967 in Geneva, to follow up on the first Pacem in Terris meeting held in New York in February of 1965. Mr. Baggs disclosed to us efforts that the center was making to invite North Vietnam to attend, and the department responded sympathetically to the idea of the conference and to these efforts. These initial contacts were with Mr. George Ball and Mr. William Bundy. The President and Secretary Rusk were informed, and Mr. Ball was elected to handle contacts with Mr. Baggs on behalf of the United States Government.

(2) In mid-November and again in early December, Mr. Baggs was joined by Mr. Ashmore in calls at the department. In these calls, the progress of the conference plans was reviewed, and the two visitors indicated that they had a tentative invitation to go to Hanoi, with Mr. Luis Quintanilla of Mexico. Messrs. Baggs and Ashmore also suggested that, if they were able to conduct useful explorations of North Vietnamese views wards peace (sic). Mr. George Ball having then left the department, the primary responsibility for these conversations passed to his successor, Mr. Katzenbach, who kept the President and the Secretary of State informed as a matter of course.

In these conversations, department representatives accepted the Baggs-Ashmore suggestions and undertook to cooperate fully. Accordingly, the position of the United States Government on key issues relating to peace was discussed at some length, so that Baggs and Ashmore could represent it accurately in Hanoi.

(3) On Dec. 23, Baggs visited the department just prior to the departure of the three-man group on Dec. 28. At that meeting, the basic understanding of the United States Government position was reaffirmed, and it was further agreed that Baggs and Ashmore would report confidentially what they were able to pick up in Hanoi.

(4) Messrs. Baggs and Ashmore visited Hanoi from Jan. 6 to Jan. 14. They then returned to the U.S. and on Jan. 18 dictated for the department a full and confiden- ticular (sic) a conversation with President Ho on Jan. 12. In this conversation, Ho had insisted that there could be no talks between the U.S. and Hanoi unless the bombing were stopped, and unless also the U.S. stopped all reinforcements during the period of the talks. Ho was reported to be adamant against any reciprocal military restraint by North Vietnam. The record does not show that he solicited any U.S. Government response to these remarks.

(5) Concurrently, prior to Jan. 18 on U.S. initiative and without any connection to the Baggs-Ashmore actions, U.S. Government representatives had established a direct channel for communication with North Vietnamese representatives in Moscow. With the apparent agreement of both sides,

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this channel was being kept wholly confidential, and was therefore not revealed to Messrs. Baggs and Ashmore in their discussions at the department.

It is, of course, fundamental to the U.S. Government dealings with Messrs. Baggs and Ashmore that there existed at the time this direct and secret channel. Exchanges through this direct channel continued through January and early February and culminated in President Johnson's letter to President Ho of Feb. 8 (mistakenly stated by Mr. Ashmore as Feb. 2). As has been stated by representatives of the department, a wide variety of proposals was put before Hanoi in these Moscow contacts, without at any time producing any useful response.

(6) Toward the end of January, Messrs. Baggs and Ashmore returned to Washington and expressed to the department the strong hope that they could be given a message for transmission to Hanoi. The department decided that, while the direct channel in Moscow was crucial and must at all costs be preserved, it would be useful to send a more general message through Messrs. Baggs and Ashmore, which would be consistent with the important messages being exchanged in Moscow. In view of this channel (of which Baggs-Ashmore were unaware) there was some question as to the further utility of detailed informal communications.

It seemed clear from the account given by Messrs. Baggs and Ashmore that their channel of communication had been established with the primary purpose of exchanges concerning North Vietnamese attendance at the May conference. Nevertheless, Baggs and Ashmore said they could send any messages for Hanoi through the regular mail to a North Vietnamese representative in Phnompenh, who in turn would relay it to a North Vietnamese official who had been the principal contact of Messrs. Baggs and Ashmore in Hanoi. Accordingly, the letter now published by Mr. Ashmore worked out with the representatives of the department, and authorized to be sent on Feb. 5. We were subsequently informed by Mr. Ashmore that this letter reached Phnompenh on Feb. 15.

(7) No useful purpose could be served by giving further details on what took place in the Moscow channel. We can say, however, that on Feb. 7, while that channel was still open and in operation, separate discussions were initiated in London between Prime Minister Wilson and Premier Kosygin of the U.S.S.R.

The combined reading of the Moscow channel and of these discussions led to the dispatch on Feb. 8 of President Johnson's letter to President Ho. This letter was of course published unilaterally by Hanoi on March 21, and is a matter of public record. It rested on, and was of course read by Hanoi in relation to, the various proposals that had been conveyed in the Moscow channel. There was no change of basic position whatever between Feb. 3 and Feb. 8, but President Johnson's letter did include a specific action proposal that speaks for itself, as does the tone of his communication.

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(8) As already noted, Hanoi had not responded in any useful way to the variety of suggestions conveyed in the Moscow channel. Its sole and apparently final response was reflected on Feb. 13, in a letter by President Ho to Pope Paul VI. This letter, in the words of one press account today, "coupled an unconditional end to the bombing with the withdrawal of American forces and the recognition of the National Liberation Front." On Feb. 15, President Ho replied formally to the President in similar terms. At the same time, Hanoi broke off the Moscow channel.

(9) Hanoi's attitude remained negative throughout. The Baggs-Ashmore efforts were necessarily handled by the department with an eye to the direct and then-confidential channel that existed concurrently to Hanoi. The latter appeared to be by far the more reliable and secure method of ascertaining Hanoi's views.

(10) Finally, we note with regret that Mr. Ashmore is apparently ignorant of the subsequently published reports of the Moscow contacts, and of their confirmation by department representatives. We noted with still greater regret that at no time since has he consulted with the department in order to attempt to understand the interrelationship that necessarily obtained between the Moscow channel and his own efforts. As this case shows, the Administration has been prepared at all times to cooperate with private individuals who may be in contact with Hanoi in any way, and who are prepared to act responsibly and discreetly. This policy continues, although it seems clear that the present disclosure will not reassure Hanoi that such private contacts will be kept secret.