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Provenance:

Category: **Uncategorized**

Person:

Date:

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against a coup, but suggested that alternative leadership should be identified and cultivated. The recommendations were promptly approved by the President. (Pentagon Papers, pp. 215-216)

On October 3 Conein contacted Minh. Minh explained that a coup was being planned, and requested assurances of American support if it were successful. Minh outlined three courses of action, one of which was the assassination of Diem's brothers, Nhu and Can (Conein, p. 25; cable, Saigon to Director, 10/5/63).

The Acting Chief of the CIA Station, David R. Smith, cabled on October 5 that he had recommended to Lodge that "we do not set ourselves irrevocably against the assassination plot, since the other two alternatives mean either a blood bath in Saigon or a protracted struggle" (Cable, Saigon to Director, 10/5/63).

A cable from the Director, CIA to Saigon responded that:

"(w)e certainly cannot be in the position of stimulating, approving, or supporting assassination, but on the other hand, we are in no way responsible for stopping every such threat of which we might receive even partial knowledge. We certainly

would not favor assassination of Diem. We believe engaging ourselves by taking position on this matter opens door too easily for probes of our position re others, re support of regime, et cetera. Consequently believe best approach is hands off. However, we naturally interested in intelligence on any such plan."

\* The other courses of action were the encirclement of Saigon by various military units and direct confrontation between military units involved in the coup and loyalist units.

\*\* Colby, who was then Chief, Far Eastern Division, drafted this cable for McCone. Colby testified:

"Q: So you were on notice as of that date that the Director personally opposed any involvement by the CIA in an assassination?"

"Colby: I certainly was." (Colby, p. 57)

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