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Provenance:

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McCone testified that he met privately with the President and the Attorney General, taking the position that "our role was to assemble all information on intelligence as to what was going on and to report it to the appropriate authorities, but to not attempt to direct it" (McCone, p. 62). He believed the United States should maintain a "hands off attitude" (McCone, p. 62). McCone testified:

"I felt that the President agreed with my position, despite the fact that he had great reservations concerning Diem and his conduct. I urged him to try to bring all the pressure we could on Diem to change his ways, to encourage more support throughout the country. My precise words to the President, and I remember them very clearly, was that Mr. President, if I was manager of a baseball team, I had one pitcher, I'd keep him in the box whether he was a good pitcher or not. By that I was saying that, if Diem was removed we would have not one coup but we would have a succession of coups and political disorder in Vietnam and it might last several years and indeed it did." (McCone, pp. 62-63.)

McCone stated that he did not discuss assassination with the President, but rather "whether we should let the coup go or use our influences not to". He left the meeting believing that the President agreed with his "hands off" recommendation (McCone, pp. 62-63). McCone cabled Smith on Oc-

"McCone directs that you withdraw recommendation to ambassador (concerning assassination plan) under McCone instructions, as we cannot be in position actively condoning such course of action and thereby engaging our responsibility therefor" (CIA to Saigon, DIR 73661, 10/6/63).

In response, the CIA Station in Saigon cabled headquarters:

"Action taken as directed. In addition, since DCM Trueheart was also present when original recommendation was made, specific withdrawal of recommendation at McCone's instruction was also conveyed to Trueheart. Ambassador Lodge concurred that he shares McCone's opinion." (Saigon to CIA, SAIG 1463, 10/7/63)