

Preface

The publication *Foreign Relations of the United States* constitutes the official record of the foreign policy of the United States. The volumes in the series include, subject to necessary security considerations, all documents needed to give a comprehensive record of the major foreign policy decisions of the United States together with appropriate materials concerning the facts that contributed to the formulation of policies. Documents in the files of the Department of State are supplemented by papers from other government agencies involved in the formulation of foreign policy. This volume also includes documents from the private collections of various government officials connected with U.S. policy toward Vietnam.

The basic documentary diplomatic record printed in the volumes of the series is edited by the Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State. The editing is guided by the principles of historical objectivity and in accordance with the following official guidance first promulgated by Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg on March 26, 1925:

There may be no alteration of the text, no deletions without indicating the place in the text where the deletion is made, and no omission of facts which were of major importance in reaching a decision. Nothing may be omitted for the purpose of concealing or glossing over what might be regarded by some as a defect of policy. However, certain omissions of documents are permissible for the following reasons:

- a. To avoid publication of matters that would tend to impede current diplomatic negotiations or other business.
- b. To condense the record and avoid repetition of needless details.
- c. To preserve the confidence reposed in the Department by individuals and by foreign governments.
- d. To avoid giving needless offense to other nationalities or individuals.
- e. To eliminate personal opinions presented in despatches and not acted upon by the Department. To this consideration there is one qualification: in connection with major decisions it is desirable, where possible, to show the alternative presented to the Department before the decision was made.

Principles of Selection for Foreign Relations, 1961-1963, Volume III

Preparation of this volume proceeded in 1984 on the basis of a research plan developed by the editors after a preliminary review of repositories in both governmental and private agencies. From the outset the editors approached their research realizing the need to supplement the written record of U.S. policy during the Vietnam war with interviews of officials who participated in the policy process. They also reviewed those oral history interviews of participants already in existence and available in various locations. Oral history citations are provided in the footnotes to the text.

On the basis of their preliminary research and review of already-published documentation, including the 1971 "Pentagon Papers," the editors developed the following six areas of focus for further research and the selection of documents for inclusion in this volume: 1) Discussion and formulation of policy in Washington; 2) Policy implementation in South Vietnam; 3) The relationship among the United States Government, the Diem government, and dissident elements in South Vietnam; 4) The implications of the Buddhist crisis which developed in May; 5) U.S. intelligence assessments of the situation in Vietnam and the viability of the Diem government and the prospects of a potential coup; and 6) U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. The editors did take careful account of the documentation in the "Pentagon Papers," but have, in general, sought to avoid reprinting documents already published there.

Discussion and formulation of policy in Washington: President John F. Kennedy made the important policy decisions on Vietnam, based on advice from the Washington foreign affairs community, either orally at meetings or in documents submitted to him. The records of these meetings with the President and advice provided to him in writing are a focus of this volume. The editors are confident that they have had complete access to all the Presidential written records bearing on Vietnam.

The most important repository for records on high-level policy formulation is the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. The records of the Department of State, to which the editors had complete access, also include a large collection of Presidential and National Security Council documentation. The papers of the President's Military Representative, General Maxwell D. Taylor, at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C., were also of unusual importance. The documents in the Taylor Papers provide a unique record of Taylor's advice to the President on Vietnam and records of some meetings both at the White House and at the Department of Defense for which there are no other accounts. Department of Defense records, especially files and papers of Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, located at the

Washington National Records Center, were an important subsidiary source. A private collection, the W. Averell Harriman Papers, were also of considerable utility. Used with the late Ambassador Harriman's permission when they were still in his possession, these papers are now housed at the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division. The Roger Hilsman papers, located at the Kennedy Library, also proved an important source of documents not found in official files.

Policy implementation in South Vietnam: The editors also selected documentation that covered the implementation of Presidentially-established policy and a small range of lesser policy decisions that did not reach the White House or were resolved in the Department of State or other agencies of the foreign affairs community. The files of the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the Kennedy Library, and the United States Information Agency are the primary documentary sources for these decisions.

The relationship among the United States Government, the Diem government, and dissident elements in South Vietnam: From the development of the Buddhist crisis in May 1963 to late August 1963 when this volume concludes, relations between the United States and the Republic of Vietnam were strained. The extensive reports of U.S. Embassy relations with the Diem government come primarily from the central files of the Department of State.

The fact that the United States was in close contact with dissident elements in South Vietnam makes events in Saigon crucial to understanding U.S. policy. The editors have, therefore, included a considerable number of telegraphic reports from the Embassy and the Central Intelligence Agency Station in Saigon on relations with dissident Vietnamese. Central Intelligence Agency records were obtained from the Kennedy Library, Department of State files, the Taylor Papers, Department of Defense records, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff files. The CIA provided full access to the Department historians to Agency documents in the Presidential libraries, and many of these documents are printed here. Some access was eventually provided to documentation retained by the Agency itself, but too late for documents to be included in this volume. Significant declassified material obtained from the CIA archives for 1963 will be printed in a subsequent volume in the *Foreign Relations* series.

The implications of the Buddhist crisis which developed in May: The Buddhist crisis had a profound effect on political developments in Vietnam, and a corresponding important effect upon U.S. assessments and U.S. policy toward Vietnam. Telegraphic reports from the Embassy in Saigon, the Consulate in Hue, and the Central Intelligence Agency Station in Saigon were the primary source of information on the unfolding of the crisis. Much of the material relating to the Buddhist crisis was found in the central files of the Department of State.

U.S. intelligence estimates of the situation in Vietnam and the viability of the Diem government and the potential prospects of a coup: The ability of the U.S. Government to assess the political and military situation in Vietnam, and to estimate the viability of the Diem government when confronted with a potential coup are of central importance during this period. This volume and its companion, which documents the latter part of 1963 (volume IV), include communications between the Central Intelligence Agency and its Station in Saigon. In addition to these telegrams, a representative selection of finished intelligence assessments prepared by the U.S. intelligence community is printed.

U.S. military involvement in Vietnam: The editors sought to include documentation that illustrated the relationship between military planning and strategy and the conduct of relations with the Republic of Vietnam and other countries. No attempt was made to document operational details of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. The Taylor Papers, the files of the Secretary of Defense and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs at the Washington National Records Center, and the decentralized files of the Department of State's Vietnam Working Group are the principal sources for this topic.

The editors also devoted significant attention to the sensitive question of press coverage of developments in Vietnam. For documentation relating to public affairs and press relations, the files of the United States Information Agency are important.

The editors of the volume are confident that the documents printed here provide a comprehensive and accurate foreign affairs record of United States policy toward and involvement in Vietnam during the first eight months of 1963. The declassification review process for the documents selected for this volume, outlined in more detail below, resulted in withholding from publication only 1.2 percent of the original manuscript.

The editors wish to acknowledge the assistance of officials at the National Archives and Records Administration's John F. Kennedy Library, in particular Suzanne Forbes. Susan Lemke at the National Defense University and Sandra Meagher at the Department of Defense deserve special thanks, as do former government officials who consented to oral history interviews for this volume.

Editorial Methodology

The documents are presented chronologically according to Washington time. Incoming telegrams from U.S. missions are placed according to time of receipt in the Department of State or other receiving agency, rather than the time of transmission; memoranda of conversation are placed according to the time and date of the conversation, rather than the date the memorandum was drafted. The editors were

not always able to determine the precise chronological order of documents produced during periods of crisis and intense activity, particularly during the Buddhist crisis. In these cases they used their best judgment.

Editorial treatment of the documents published in the *Foreign Relations* series follows Office style guidelines, supplemented by guidance from the Editor in Chief and the chief technical editor. The source text is reproduced as exactly as possible, including marginalia or other notations, which are described in the footnotes. Obvious typographical errors are corrected, but other mistakes and omissions in the source text are corrected by bracketed insertions: a correction is set in italic type; an omission in roman type. Bracketed insertions are also used to indicate text that has been omitted because it deals with an unrelated subject (in roman type) or because it remained classified after the declassification review process (in italic type). The amount of material not declassified has been noted by indicating the number of lines or pages of source text that were omitted. All ellipses and brackets that appear in the source text are so identified by footnotes.

The first footnote to each document indicates the document's source, original classification, distribution, and drafting information. The source footnote also provides the background of important documents and policies and indicates if the President and/or his major policy advisers read it. Every effort has been made to determine if a document has been previously published and this information has been included in the source footnote. If two or more different accounts of a meeting or event of comparable value are available and one or more is already declassified and published, the editors chose to print the still unpublished one and obtain its declassification.

Editorial notes and additional annotation summarize pertinent material not printed in this volume, indicate the location of additional documentary sources, provide references to important related documents printed in other volumes, describe key events, and summarize and provide citations to public statements that supplement and elucidate the printed documents. Information derived from memoirs and other first-hand accounts has been used when applicable to supplement the official record.

Declassification Review Procedures

Declassification review of the documents selected for publication was conducted by the Division of Historical Documents Review, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Department of State. The review was made in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, the Privacy Act, and the criteria established in Executive Order 12356 regarding:

- 1) military plans, weapons, or operations;
- 2) the vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, projects, or plans relating to the national security;
- 3) foreign government information;
- 4) intelligence activities (including special activities), or intelligence sources or methods;
- 5) foreign relations or foreign activities of the United States;
- 6) scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security;
- 7) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities;
- 8) cryptology; and
- 9) a confidential source.

Declassification decisions entailed concurrence of the appropriate geographic and functional bureaus in the Department of State, other concerned agencies of the U.S. Government, and appropriate foreign governments regarding documents of those governments. The principle guiding declassification review is to release as much information as is consistent with contemporary requirements of national security and sound foreign relations.

Louis J. Smith and Edward C. Keefer of the Office of the Historian compiled and edited this volume under the supervision of Charles S. Sampson, the Vietnam project leader, and Editor in Chief John P. Glennon. Suzanne E. Coffman prepared the lists of names and abbreviations. Rita M. Baker performed the technical editing. Barbara A. Bacon of the Publishing Services Division (Paul M. Washington, Chief) oversaw production of the volume. Max Franke prepared the index.

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