

November 14, 1960

Not for distribution or
discussion.

MEMORANDUM TO THE FILE

FROM: Ralph F. Turner

RE: Interview with General Nguyen van Ia,
Director General of Police and Security Services

At 4:00 PM November 14, 1960, a meeting was held in the office of General Nguyen van Ia, Director General of the Police and Security Services. Present were General Ia; Lt. Huynh van Luan, Chief of General Services, VBI; Ralph Turner, Chief of Police Administration Division, Michigan State University Advisory Group; and Mr. Le hong Chuong, interpreter, Michigan State University.

Lt. Luan was wearing his army uniform; General Ia was dressed in civilian clothes. After exchanging comments about the general events of the period November 11 - 13, 1960, the writer asked General Ia for an account of his activities and impressions of the attempted coup d'etat. All questions asked were phrased in as an innocuous manner as possible and it was apparent that the General was interested and willing to talk about his own experiences. The following account is a resumé of General Ia's comments which were dictated immediately upon return to the MSU office.

According to General Ia, when he was awakened by the first shots he left his home immediately and went directly to the office of the Surete Headquarters. General Ia's home is located within the Surete Headquarters compound (Camp des Mares), facing Cong Hoa Blvd., and approximately 100 meters west of the intersection of Cong Hoa Blvd. and Vo Tanh Street. The Surete Headquarters building is approximately 200 meters from General Ia's home in the direction of Vo Tanh Street. Upon arrival at the Headquarters building, General Ia reported that he got in contact with the Office of the Presidency at Independence Palace by telephone, to report on events occurring at Camp des Mares and to receive instructions. He also contacted Municipal Police Headquarters and ordered two companies (about 200 men) of police officers to reinforce troops at Independence Palace. Following this, he established three defense points at Camp des Mares, one to be commanded by Lt. Luan, the second by Capt. Vong, and the third by Capt. Dan. General Ia remained at the Surete Headquarters building until, according to his report, he saw that the paratroops had penetrated the compound at the intersection of Cong Hoa and Vo Tanh Streets. At this time General Ia left the Surete Headquarters, joined Lt. Luan, and secreted themselves in one of the rooms of the living quarters of Surete agents. This barracks building is located between the present new communications center and the new jail at Camp des Mares.

While at this location, General Ia again got in touch with the Presidency by telephone. The living quarters herein referred to were visited by Lt. Luan, Mr. Chuong, and Mr. Turner, who verified the fact that there was a telephone in this building.

General Ia reported that Lt. Liem, Surete communications officer, was on duty in the communications building and was in contact with the Surete Headquarters at BanMeThuot, using CW equipment. General Ia stated that Lt. Liem received messages from BanMeThuot and apparently was able to slip undetected to General Ia's hiding place, where he gave the messages to General Ia, who in turn prepared replies and issued instructions to the Surete at BanMeThuot.

General Ia and Lt. Luan remained in seclusion at this place until approximately 12:00 noon, November 11, 1960. Around this time, Lt. Luan left the dwelling quarters and made his way undetected to the ICC Headquarters adjoining Camp des Mares. It was noted that a barbed wire fence had to be cut to make this escape. When asked, Lt. Luan said that he obtained a pair of pincers in the house where they were staying. Lt. Luan contacted Vietnamese officials at the ICC and then apparently returned for General Ia after arrangements for General Ia's continued seclusion had been made. General Ia then accompanied Lt. Luan to ICC Headquarters.

General Ia stated that he remained concealed at ICC Headquarters until approximately 7:00 PM November 11, 1960. During this time, he again stated that he was in contact with the Presidency. According to General Ia, he left the ICC Headquarters at approximately 7:00 PM November 11, 1960 and joined friends in the city.

Some time during the morning of November 12, 1960 General Ia indicated that he joined troops of the Fifth Military District who recaptured the Surete Headquarters.

GENERAL REMARKS

General Ia asked if we would be interested in hearing the story of how the paratroops were led into the attempted coup d'etat. He seemed interested in giving this report, which is as follows:

According to General Ia, the paratroops were told by Col. Thi that Pres. Diem was in danger at the Palace and that the paratroops were to move in and rescue him. The paratroops were also told that the members of the Presidential Guard had revolted and were attempting to capture Pres. Diem. It was by this ruse that the paratroops were moved into position around the Palace. General Ia also reported that the paratroops were told that the Surete had joined forces with the Viet Cong; this being the reason for attacking Surete Headquarters.

General Ia stated that the paratroops entered the Surete Headquarters, searched his office thoroughly, but did not destroy anything except pictures of General Ia which were in his office. No pictures or statues of Pres. Diem were disturbed. This writer saw the familiar busts and pictures of Pres. Diem in their usual positions in General Ia's office and did notice that the usual pictures of General Ia were no longer present. General Ia reported that

his home was ransacked and all of his money and valuables taken, General Ia escaping with 1200 piasters.

The paratroops searched a number of the offices of the Surete, merely pulling out desk drawers and scattering the contents. General Ia reports that there was no attempt to burn or destroy records and documents.

When asked about the prisoners in the jail, General Ia stated that the paratroops did not attempt to liberate the prisoners and in fact reinforced the guard around the jail.

No damage was reported to the communications equipment. General Ia reported that when Lt. Liem escaped from the Communications Headquarters he took with him certain pieces of equipment which would create the appearance of the communications equipment being inoperative.

There was superficial damage to General Ia's house; however, there was very extensive damage to the house of Mr. Nguyen van Hai, Chief of Cabinet of the Police and Security Services. Mr. Hai's house is located at the intersection of Cong Hoa and Vo Tanh Streets, which was apparently the point of assault and entry on Camp des Mares. The body of paratrooper Lt. Col. Nguyen trieu Hong was reported to have been found in the vicinity of Mr. Hai's house.

General Ia reported that three Surete agents were wounded, one seriously.

There was very superficial damage to the Surete Headquarters Building.

When asked about the families of General Ia and Mr. Hai, it was reported that the families remained in their homes during the attack and were not mistreated by the paratroopers.

It was reported that the weapons carried by Capt. Vong's men and Capt. Dan's men were captured by the paratroopers. Lt. Luan, who was in command of approximately 20 army engineer corps troops, and his men were not disarmed by the paratroopers.

Eight trucks and one jeep reported to have been used by the paratroopers were recaptured by the army and are now parked on the parade grounds at Camp des Mares.

General Ia stated that the recapture of Camp des Mares by the Fifth Military District troops was delayed on the order of Pres. Diem, who did not wish to have further bloodshed.

Not for distribution of discussion

November 16, 1960

MEMORANDUM TO THE RECORD

FROM: Ralph F. Turner

RE: Interview with Mr. Tran van Tu, Director
Saigon Municipal Police Department

At 3:00 P.M. November 15, 1960, a meeting was held in the office of Mr. Tran van Tu, Director of the Saigon Municipal Police Department. Present were Director Tu; Ralph Turner, Chief, Police Administration Division, Michigan State University; and Mr. Le hung Chuong, Michigan State University interpreter.

After exchanging greetings, Mr. Tu began a discussion of the events of November 11 - 13, 1960. The questions asked Mr. Tu were similar to those asked of General Ia, Director of Police and Security Service. Mr. Tu's remarks were as follows:

Upon hearing the first shots at approximately 3:20 A.M., November 11, 1960, Mr. Tu left his home and went to his office in the Headquarters of the Saigon Municipal Police Department, 268 Tran Hung Dao Street. Mr. Tu's home is adjacent to the Headquarters building. Director Tu stated that upon reaching his office he contacted General Ia, Director of Police and Security Service, and was ordered by General Ia to send two companies of police officers to reinforce the guard at Independence Palace. Mr. Tu contacted the Minister of Interior but the connection was broken. As the gunfire continued, Mr. Tu began receiving telephone calls from the precinct commanders of surrounding police districts requesting instructions. Mr. Tu stated that inasmuch as he did not know at that time who was responsible for the fighting, he instructed the precinct commanders to remain at their posts and order the men to preserve law and order.

During this time Mr. Tu received another order from General Ia requesting that a third company of police officers be sent to Camp des Mares because General Ia reported that troops were attacking Camp des Mares (Surete Headquarters). At approximately this same time, which was near 4:00 A.M., November 11, 1960, Mr. Tu reported that approximately one battalion of paratroopers surrounded and occupied Municipal Police Headquarters. The troops occupied the Headquarters from three different positions; one group advanced from the rear, a second advanced from a position east of the main entrance, and the third group advanced from a position west of the main entrance. Mr. Tu stated that because of the fact that three companies of men had been sent from Police Headquarters there were very few officers left in reserve and the Municipal Police Headquarters was occupied without any difficulty. There were no visible signs of damage beyond a few bullet holes at Police Headquarters.

Mr. Tu was taken prisoner in his office at approximately 4:00 A.M. Friday, November 11, 1960, and kept there under guard until approximately 7:00 P.M. Friday, November 11, 1960, at which time he was transferred to the second floor conference room, where he and a number of other supervisory officers were confined until approximately 9:30 or 10:00 A.M. Saturday, November 12, 1960, at which time the Police Headquarters was liberated.

GENERAL REMARKS

Mr. Tu stated that a police outpost in the Eighth Precinct, south of the Precinct Headquarters and south of the Saigon River, was attacked by Viet Cong at approximately 1:00 A.M., November 12, 1960. It was estimated that about 20 or 30 Viet Cong, reportedly dressed in paratroop uniforms, some wearing helmets, and armed with rifles and sub-machine guns, attacked the police outpost. It was further reported that this group of Viet Cong forced a large number of civilians to move with them in the attack on the police outpost. It was reported that three or four police officers were wounded and one killed in resisting the attack. The Viet Cong occupied the outpost for a short time, captured eight or nine weapons, and then retreated.

Following this attack, the precinct commander of the Eighth District came to Municipal Police Headquarters and Mr. Tu was permitted by his paratroop guards to talk with the precinct commander while he reported the incident of the Viet Cong attack. Mr. Tu asked the commanding officer of the paratroopers occupying Police Headquarters to send a group of men to investigate the Viet Cong attack at the police outpost. The paratroop commander stated that he could not send any men on this mission.

Mr. Tu stated that he believes all of the police sidearms taken by the paratroopers have been, or will be, recovered. A small number of weapons are still being held at the General Staff Headquarters and the police have been requested to see whether any of the guns belong to the Municipal Police Department.

The interview was terminated when Mr. Tu had to leave to accompany President Diem to a ceremony at Paratroop Headquarters for the installation of the new Paratroop Commander.