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spokesman. At the most critical moment of the coup attempt, the U.S. Ambassador urged Diem to give in to rebel demands to avoid bloodshed. Earlier, he had urged others to urge Diem to compromise with the rebels. The most charitable view that Diem could take would be that our Ambassador is a badly-informed man, but he would also then believe that the Ambassador has been far too prone to listen to the wrong people in Vietnam, people who are Diem's enemies.

Actually, Ambassador Durbrow is not entirely to blame for these blunders. The invitation to engage in this badly-timed and demoralizing meddling in Vietnam's affairs was given the Ambassador by the Southeast Asia desk staff in State message 775. This action, on top of many others which seem to have weakened both the U.S. position and the cause of freedom in Southeast Asia in the immediate past, should make us note that advice and actions of this staff carry definite hazards to the security of the U.S. Their advice and instructions on the next events in Vietnam deserve the most careful scrutiny and evaluation, particularly by Defense whose resources are called upon so heavily to carry out U.S. policy in this area. The long-known strategic value of Southeast Asia places a premium upon our military participation.

Finally, it appears that General McGarr, the MAAG Chief, came through this test of U.S. influence very well. Both the rebel forces and the loyal forces turned to him for counsel. He seems to have handled them with complete honesty and objectivity which will increase his potential for influencing the Vietnamese military in the future. This is a factor which should carry its proper weight in future considerations of our actions in Vietnam. Also, it should be borne in mind that this will subject General McGarr to considerable vindictive attack by the Vietminh and by those jealous of his increased prestige.

These observations are prompted by the fact that it is critical that U.S. policy makers have some deeper understanding of people and events in Vietnam, if we are to keep Southeast Asia free. It is our key piece in the area and must be handled correctly.

Although this memo deals with a most sensitive subject, you may wish to show it to General Lemnitzer and Assistant Secretary Irwin who also are concerned with this problem.

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