A Guide to the Microfilm Edition of Confidential U.S. State Department Special Files

VIETNAM WORKING GROUP, 1963–1966

A UPA Collection from LexisNexis™
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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection from the State Department records at the National Archives focuses on the activities of the Vietnam Working Group, a special group formed in the State Department’s Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs in 1963 to deliberate on U.S. policy in Vietnam. Over the life of the group, members included Chalmers B. Wood, James M. Montgomery, Thomas F. Conlon, Theodore J. C. Heavner, Joseph Brent, H. Freeman Matthews Jr., and Paul M. Kattenburg. Members corresponded with many people in the State Department and collected reports on a wide array of topics related to Vietnam.

The papers of the Vietnam Working Group reflect the significant increase in U.S. economic and military aid to Vietnam under President John F. Kennedy. The papers begin with materials from 1963 pertaining to the U.S. Operations Mission (USOM) in Vietnam and other U.S. economic aid programs to Vietnam. Minutes of staff meetings of USOM for 1963 cover a broad range of aid topics, including agricultural assistance, industrial development, public health programs, and public works programs.

In particular, USOM meeting minutes describe the successes and failures of the strategic hamlet program, which was a major part of the U.S. counterinsurgency effort in South Vietnam by 1963. The minutes of a May 8 meeting, for example, note that USOM would open eight new training schools for strategic hamlet teachers on May 27. At a May 29 USOM meeting, USOM Vietnam director Joseph Brent reported on a trip to Phan Tiet for the opening of one of these new training schools. At a May 1 meeting, USOM discussed the successful program at Quang Ngai, as well as the inability of USOM to set up any program in An Giang province because of the large Viet Cong presence. The AID files also highlight other important parts of the U.S. counterinsurgency effort, such as the Commercial Import Program (CIP), a program designed to help build the social and economic infrastructure in South Vietnam.

Another major series of documents covers defense affairs. Several items address the problem of U.S. bombing in South Vietnam and the possibility of alienating the local population. In addition, a February 1963, paper from the Foreign Service Institute raises the issue of decreasing U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. This issue is further addressed in a file on a May 6, 1963, meeting with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in Honolulu, Hawaii (Reel 1, Frame 0369). One of the items on the meeting agenda was a plan to withdraw 1,000 U.S. military personnel by December 1963 and to decide on the number of U.S. military personnel needed in Vietnam as of July 1, 1964. An October 18, 1963, memorandum from Paul M. Kattenburg to Roger Hilsman comments further on the issues of troop withdrawals and the overall number of U.S. military personnel in Vietnam (Reel 1, Frame 0380).

The largest group of documents in this collection covers political matters. Vietnam’s Buddhist community attracted worldwide attention in 1963 due to a series of demonstrations against the policies of the Catholic-led government. The origins of the Buddhist issue are covered in a background study prepared by Dr. Wesley R. Fishel from September 1963 (Reel 2, Frame 0062). Other materials in the collection survey the mass protests of Buddhists and university students, which helped to overthrow the presidency of Ngo Dinh
Diem. Documents reflect the U.S. government’s increasing disfavor with Diem policies because of repressive measures against the Buddhists and other factors. This collection covers the withdrawal of U.S. support for Diem’s government, which resulted in the military coup and the president’s execution in the fall of 1963.

During 1963, Buddhist protesters prompted the tirades of President Diem’s sister-in-law, Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu, whose comments and actions are presented in the collection’s materials. Documents show that Madame Nhu’s statements to the press about the self-immolation of Buddhist demonstrators made her a disastrous spokeswoman for her brother-in-law. Documents from 1964 reflect Madame’s Nhu’s bitterness toward the U.S. after her husband’s and Diem’s execution by military officers. Documents also show Madame Nhu’s attempts to obtain a visa from the State Department for a return to Vietnam in 1964.

This collection details the infiltration by Vietcong into South Vietnam and its strikes against strategic hamlets (Reel 1, Frame 0688). Materials address North Vietnamese infiltration through Laos and the U.S. proposal in 1965 of a Laos highway project to block passage into South Vietnam (Reel 6, Frame 0304). Documents also cover military assistance to the Vietcong from North Vietnam and China.

This collection contains much material on Vietnam’s Chieu Hoi program, which was established to encourage defection of Vietcong members and the North Vietnamese. Documents cover U.S. attempts to undermine insurgent activities in Vietnam’s villages through reconciliation and pacification policies. Materials in the collection show that pacification efforts promoted nation building through strengthening Vietnam’s infrastructure, building schools, and implementing agricultural reform.

Other materials in the collection cover the U.S. Senate’s debate on the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, which gave President Lyndon B. Johnson authority to take “all necessary measures” for maintaining peace in Southeast Asia. Congress passed the joint resolution on August 7, 1964, only five days after an attack by North Vietnamese torpedo boats on a U.S. destroyer. Documents include texts of the Senate Committee hearings with testimony from Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Secretary of Defense McNamara in support of passage of the resolution. Documents also present statements from Senator Wayne Morse (D, Ore.) in opposition to the resolution.

Apart from the specific documents mentioned above, this collection consists generally of memoranda, reports, correspondence, policy studies, and briefing papers. The materials are organized chronologically by year, and within each year, in alphabetical order by subject. The major subjects covered are U.S. economic assistance to Vietnam (AID), defense affairs (DEF), and political affairs (POL).
NOTE ON SOURCES


EDITORIAL NOTE

Records created or filed at the State Department can be found in Record Group 59. This Record Group is comprised of two types of records: the Central Files, records originating from various embassies and consulates, other agencies, and within the State Department itself; and “Special Files” or Lot Files, which are records maintained outside of the Central Files and originating in various offices, bureaus, and committees in the State Department. In addition, Lot Files relate to certain administrative functions, individuals, other organizational units, or special subjects or events.

The records microfilmed in the publication were created, collected, and collated by the Vietnam Working Group within the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs. Upon transmittal to the National Archives, these records were assigned the following Lot numbers by the State Department: 67D54, 68D84, 69D67, 70D102, 70D232 & 70D233. These Lot Files comprise all of the available Vietnam Working Group’s Subject Files.

UPA made its selection of these Special Files to microfilm after extensive research of archival indexes for records relating to the internal and foreign affairs of Vietnam, U.S. foreign policy in Southeast Asia, and Vietnam’s special role in the Cold War.

These records have been microfilmed in their original archival order, as filed by the State Department, and in their entirety as available at the National Archives.
# Abbreviations

The following acronyms and initialisms have been used throughout this guide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CG</td>
<td>Civil Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIDG</td>
<td>Civilian Irregular Defense Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIF</td>
<td>Counterinsurgency funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRV</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Vietnam [North Vietnam]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE/VN</td>
<td>Far East/Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAO</td>
<td>General Accounting Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GVN</td>
<td>Government of [South] Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW</td>
<td>Department of Health, Education, and Welfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee of the Red Cross</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEMCON</td>
<td>Memorandum of conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Public Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POW</td>
<td>Prisoner of war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RVNAF</td>
<td>Republic of [South] Vietnam Air Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDC</td>
<td>Self Defense Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEATO</td>
<td>South East Asia Treaty Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>SVN</td>
<td>South Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TF/SEA</td>
<td>Task Force/Southeast Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USIA</td>
<td>U.S. Information Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USIS</td>
<td>U.S. Information Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USOM</td>
<td>U.S. Operations Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USMACV</td>
<td>U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WG/VN</td>
<td>Working Group/Vietnam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REEL INDEX

The following is a listing of the folders that compose Confidential U.S. State Department Special Files, Vietnam Working Group, 1963–1966. The four-digit number on the far left is the frame at which a particular file folder begins. This is followed by the file title, the date(s) of the file, and the total number of pages. Substantive issues are highlighted under the heading Major Topics.

Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Subject Files of the Vietnam Working Group

Reel 1
Frame No.

1963

   Major Topics: Staff meetings of the USOM/Vietnam, GAO review of AID operations.
   Major Topic: Rice-fertilizer program.
0146 AID 7 [Aid] CIF [Counterinsurgency funding] [1963]. 22 pp.
   Major Topic: Military aid to South Vietnam from free world countries other than U.S.
0183 AID 15 [Aid] PL 480, Food for Peace Program [Agricultural Commodity Agreements],
   Major Topic: Skirmishes.
0206 CON Consular Affairs (General), 1963. 6 pp.
   Major Topic: Viet Cong infiltration.
   Major Topic: Air bombing strikes.
   Major Topic: Air bombing strikes
   Major Topics: Military organization; civil police.
   Major Topic: Increase in force level.
   Major Topic: New Zealand troops.
   27 pp.
0366 E 1 Economic Affairs (General) [1963]. 3 pp.
   Major Topic: U.S. military reduction in Vietnam; Paul M. Kattenburg; Roger Hilsman.
0402 INF Information Activities (General), 1963. 18 pp.
   Major Topics: USIS; USIA.
0420 INTL Intelligence, 1963. 16 pp.
0436 LAB Labor and Manpower, 1963. 4 pp.
   Major Topic: Labor problems at overseas military installations.
0440 LEG Legislative and Legal Affairs, 1963. 2 pp.
   Major Topics: Michael Mansfield; U.S. military policy in Southeast Asia.
0470 Memos [1963], 33 pp.
   Major Topic: Counterinsurgency operations.
   Major Topics: A. E. Mitchell; Daniel Gerber.
   Major Topic: Frederick E. Nolting Jr.
   Major Topic: Military activities of Viet Cong.
0828 POL [Political Affairs and Relations: General], 1963. 2 pp.
   Major Topic: Nguyen Dinh Thuan.
0839 POL 1 [Political Affairs and Relations] General Policy, Background (Briefing Papers), 1963. 121 pp.
   Major Topics: Political conditions; economic conditions.

Reel 2

1963 cont.

   Major Topic: Buddhist demonstrations.
   Major Topic: Buddhist resistance to government.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Major Topic(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0155</td>
<td>POL 3 [Political Affairs and Relations] Organizations and Alignments, 1963.</td>
<td>10 pp.</td>
<td>UN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0172</td>
<td>POL 7 [Political Affairs and Relations] Visits and Meetings (to Vietnam), 1963.</td>
<td>7 pp.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reel 3

1963 cont.

   Major Topic: War protest by Paul L. Mitchell.

   Major Topics: Opposition to repressive acts by Diem regime; reaction to persecution of Buddhists.

   Major Topic: Malaria eradication.

1964

0088 [ADM] Administration (General), 1964. 5 pp.
   Major Topic: Diplomatic and consular service.


0096 AID [Aid], 1964. 21 pp.


   Major Topic: Finnish worker protest against use of toxic gas by South Vietnamese Army.


   Major Topics: Anzus Treaty; U.S. commitment to Australia and New Zealand regarding Indonesia-Malaysia dispute.


0288 E Economic Affairs (General), 1964. 23 pp.
   Major Topic: Development of Mekong River basin.


0313 INF Information Activities, 1964. 7 pp.


0328 INT 6 Collection of Intelligence, 1964. 2 pp.

0330 Dr. Janse, 1964 4 pp.
   Major Topic: Olov Janse.

0334 LAB Labor and Manpower, 1964. 41 pp.
   Major Topics: Confederation of the Workers of Vietnam; Tran Quoc Buu.

0375 LEG Legislative and Legal Affairs, 1964. 2 pp.

   Major Topic: Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing.

0417 LEG 4 [Legislative and Legal Affairs] Congressional Committees (Morse Questions and Answers), 1964. 19 pp.
   Major Topics: Wayne Morse; U.S. military assistance.


   Major Topic: Henry Cabot Lodge.

0492 Miscellaneous, 1964. 5 pp.

Reel 4

1964 cont.


Major Topics: Chinese Communist opposition to conference on Vietnam; background and circulation of newspapers; North Vietnam attack of U.S. naval vessels in Gulf of Tonkin; press conference with Secretary of State Dean Rusk.


Major Topic: International Study Group on Democratic Development.


Major Topic: Repressive measures by government.


Major Topics: Bernard Fall; Nguyen Van Hoe; Tran Thien Khiem; Pham Dang Lam.
0507  POL 6 [Political Affairs and Relations] Prominent Persons, Biographic Data, M–Z [1964].
15 pp.
Major Topics: Duong Van Minh; Vu Van Thai.


Major Topic: U.S. visit by Malaysian prime minister.


Major Topics: Buddhists; Thich Giao Duc.


Major Topic: Installation of new government.

12 pp.
Major Topic: Appointment of Tran Thien Khiem as Ambassador of Vietnam.

0629  POL 18 [Political Affairs and Relations] Provincial, Municipal, and State Government (Hue); Reports from Hue Consulate; 1964. 16 pp.


Major Topics: Opposition of Bertrand Russell to war; Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation.


Major Topic: Activities of Communist guerrillas.


Major Topic: Application by Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu for visa.

Major Topic: Tran Van Tung.

Major Topics: Henry Cabot Lodge; letter from U.S. serviceman’s wife on Vietnam War.

Reel 5

1964 cont.

Major Topics: Edward G. Lansdale; Robert McNamara.

Major Topics: Petitions against the war; Tran Van Tung; proposed settlement by U.S., United Kingdom, and France of Vietnam war.
*Major Topics:* Tran Tam; Thomas J. Corcoran.

*Major Topic:* Broadcasting by Voice of America.


*Major Topic:* Economic and military aid from U.S.

*Major Topics:* U.S. visit by President Ngo Dinh Diem; economic and military aid from U.S.; economic and military growth of Communist China.

*Major Topics:* Tonkin Gulf Resolution; maps of Southeast Asia; U.S. collective defense arrangements; Dean Rusk.

Reel 6

1965


*Major Topic:* World opinion on Vietnam.

*Major Topic:* Political and diplomatic chronology since 1950.


0234  POL 1 [Political Affairs and Relations: General Policy and Background] Memoranda of Conversation (Departmental), 1965. 38 pp.

0272  POL 1 [Political Affairs and Relations: General Policy and Background] Other Areas, 1965. 32 pp.

*Major Topic:* Proposed highway project to block infiltration from North Vietnam.

*Major Topic:* Conference proposal.


0368  POL 1-1 [Political Affairs and Relations: General Policy and Background] 1965. 8 pp.

*Major Topic:* Viet Cong.


POL 7 [Political Affairs and Relations] Visits, Meetings, 1965. 3 pp.

Major Topic: Buddhists.


Major Topics: Support for U.S. policy; demonstration in protest of war.

Major Topic: Use of napalm.

Major Topic: U.S. military personnel.


REF Refugees and Migration, Jan.–June 1965. 8 pp.


1966

Major Topic: Inflation.

Major Topics: Economic conditions; guerrilla warfare; Viet Cong.

Major Topics: Agricultural resources development; anti-inflation measures; Viet Cong; electric power; international aid; public health; industrial production; harbors and ports; public administration projects; public safety; refugees; water supply.

Major Topic: Charitable organizations.

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AV Aviation (Civil), 1st Half, 1966. 3 pp.


Major Topics: International Monetary Fund; inflation.

Major Topic: Military spending.

Major Topic: Anti-inflation measures.
Major Topic: Recommendations after Secretary John Gardner’s visit to Saigon.


Major Topic: Operations against Viet Cong’s subversive actions.


INF Information Activities, 1966. 6 pp.

Major Topic: Survey of university students in Saigon.

INT 11 [Intelligence] Research (such as Rand Corp.) [1966]. 2 pp.
Major Topic: Viet Cong


Major Topics: Edward Lansdale; Nguyen Van Thieu.

Major Topic: Lyndon B. Johnson.


POL 1 Political Affairs and Relations: General Policy and Background] Memoranda to Offices of Vice-President [1966]. 47 pp.
Major Topic: Hubert H. Humphrey.

Major Topic: Lyndon B. Johnson.


POL 1 Political Affairs and Relations: General Policy and Background] South Vietnam/Other, 1966. 4 pp.


POL 1 Political Affairs and Relations: General Policy and Background], Cambodia/South Vietnam, August–Dec. 1966. 20 pp.

POL 1 Political Affairs and Relations: General Policy and Background], Briefing Papers, June–Dec. [1966]. 18 pp.

Major Topic: Vu Van Thai.

Major Topics: Buddhism; Vu Van Thai.


Major Topic: SEATO.

Major Topic: Pham Duy Khiem.


Major Topic: Henry Cabot Lodge.

POL 7 [Political Affairs and Relations: Visits, Meetings] [Lodge, George—Visit and Reports], 1966. 126 pp.
Major Topics: George Lodge; Ngo Dinh Diem; Viet Cong; National Liberation Front; pacification; economic conditions.

Reel 8

1966 cont.

POL 7 [Political Affairs and Relations: Visits, Meetings] Secretary’s Trip to Far East, [1966]. 132 pp.
Major Topics: POWs; rice production; economic conditions; harbors and ports; negotiations; UN; North Vietnam; Cambodia.


Major Topics: Drafting of constitution; elections.


Major Topic: Pacification.


Major Topic: Matthew Dang Sy.

Major Topics: Viet Cong; Simulmatics Corp.

Major Topic: Viet Cong.

Major Topics: Chieu Hoi; Viet Cong.
*Major Topics:* Economic conditions; Chieu Hoi; education.


*Major Topics:* Use of ultraviolet and infrared equipment for detecting enemy movement; Viet Cong.


*Major Topic:* Prisoner exchange for Gustav Hertz held by Viet Cong.

*Major Topic:* POWs.

POL 29 [Political Affairs and Relations: Arrests and Detention] Prisoner Files (6); General—Other ICRC material; 1966. 26 pp.
*Major Topics:* POWs; North Vietnam.

*Major Topics:* POWs; Everett Alvarez, Jr.; ICRC.

*Major Topic:* POWs.


*Major Topic:* Social science research project.

The following subject index is a guide to the major topics in this microfilm publication. The first number after an entry refers to the reel, while the four-digit number following the colon refers to the frame number at which a particular file folder containing information on the subject begins. Hence, 3:0096 directs the researcher to the folder that begins at Frame 0096 of Reel 3. By referring to the Reel Index, which constitutes the initial section of this guide, the researcher will find the folder title, inclusive dates, and a list of Major Topics, listed in the order in which they appear on the film.

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Arrest
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