

A LOG (RUMORS AND ALL) OF THE EVENTS OF NOVEMBER 11-13, 1960
IDM - 267 Phan Thanh Gian, Saigon, Vietnam

November 11 - A.M.

3:30 Awakened by intense firing. Rifles, machine guns, mortars, tracers. Palace area.

3:30- 7:45 Sporadic firing.

7:45-10:00 More intense. Some firing within block or two. Squad patrolling along Phan Thanh Gian.

7:40 Aschom brings news that paratroopers are attempting a takeover. PTT and police headquarters seized.

8:30 Turner indicates firing practically in front yard--i.e., at his corner.

9:00 Walton: Gendarmerie have joined paratroopers; armored cars; prisoners, dead and wounded. Airport taken by rebels. All Americans staying in houses.

11:00 Finkles, baby, 2 servants, 2 suitcases, arrive; in near-hysterical state after constant firing near them; got out with aid of tank commander. Moving in with us.

11:15 Ngo Ton Dat reports thinking night-time noise was Viet Cong bombs. Went to Foreign Affairs at 7:00, saw paratrooper bodies in front of Palace gates. Snapped pictures of prisoners taken by paratroopers. Also reports 4 battalions of paratroopers and 1 of marines in assault. Diem has issued radio call for help from 5th Military District (Can Tho).

P.M.

12:30 Message: Stay off streets, rebels say.

1:00 Additional troops moving into Le Van Duyet area.

1:30 Eleanor Fox reports MAAG says 2:00 p.m. deadline on Diem's accepting ultimatum of rebels. Meanwhile, national radio captured by rebels, repeats message that Army has won and Diem is deposed.

2:00 Turners arrive; on way to Strechers'. Told to evacuate house, as was neighbor. Huge mortar set up in street in front of house. Firing to begin 1 hour after message received, i.e., at 2:30.

4:00 Donoghue arrives. News that pro-Diem troops are all over his area and Turners' corner. Have set up mortar.

4:10 Checking Donoghue story with Coster at USOM: he says Diem has brought in troops from north and south. Situation began to change about 11:00 a.m. Asked him why rebels hadn't followed through when had Diem on run. Coster didn't know; perhaps they lost their nerve.

4:30 Woodruff reports he will stay in his house for now. Also says Embassy security officer, who lives next door, says revolutionists will not harm Americans.

5:00 Dale Rose calls from 137 Pasteur. All staff still ok there. From his assistant Dale has rumor that some of pro-Diem forces brought in (4 battalions) actually side with paratroopers.

November 11 - P.M. (Cont.)

- 5:30 Neighbor's cook heard rumor that door to President's room was battered down and he was found dead, having taken poison.
- 6:00 Tommy Adkins arrives. Has moved family to Strechers', where Turners are also. Discussed question of his moving to Apt. 17, 137 Pasteur for the night. Many troops on his street, heavily armed, tough looking. May stay at Strechers', as farther from fighting.
- 8:50 National radio has announced Diem met all terms unconditionally. New cabinet--Drs. Quat and Quan (?) members. Whether Diem remains part of government unknown. Fate unknown. Gen. Le Van Ty, in name of Diem, accepted new government. Asked all to stop fighting and return to barracks, ready to fight Viet Cong; implies Diem remains as President, at least for transition period. Phan Quang Dan and Phan Khac Suu fully support revolutionary committee.
- 9:55 Leaflets were dropped. Diem signs to be taken down. Nhu seriously wounded, rumor (later found to be false). Possibility of further military action because Diem's Rangers not reconciled. Will Viet Cong attack during night? In any case, possibility of street fighting. According to Don Baker, Embassy, coup didn't occur on schedule. Diem's Rangers had time to come to rescue. Diem's hand thus strengthened for bargaining. BBC said 5 battalions of paratroopers brought about coup. News of coup in Laos--anti-Pathet Lao.
- 10:00 Dr. Dan asks for public demonstrations in the streets. Diem doesn't want to resign, nor give up, along with his family. Report that Diem on radio himself, saying that moving out of Palace so provisional government could move in. Rebel radio reports Diem agrees to: 1) Dissolve present government; 2) Form military provisional government; and 3) With revolutionary committee, form a national union government.

November 12 - A.M.

- 6:00 After a quiet night, heavy firing begins in Palace area again, or Le Van Duyet Park area, to be more accurate. After about 15 minutes, firing becomes sporadic, quitting altogether at 7:00.
- 7:30 Firing begins again. Increasingly heavy after 5 minutes. Radio at least since 5:00 a.m. has been broadcasting same messages as late yesterday, to the effect that Diem must go, his family is no good, he has not provided the country with security, etc.
- 7:48 Firing by small weapon, seemingly near our house. One bullet hit house, near bathroom window, which our older daughter was approaching at the time.
- 7:55 Troops coming from Tay Ninh. Division from My Tho said to be loyal to rebels. Big bridge on old highway to north blown up--near Thu Duc.
- 8:45 Baker, Embassy, reports that very heavy firing may break out soon.
- 8:55 Plane dropping leaflets.
- 9:15 Leaflets dropped are from Diem and say 5th Military District troops, though delayed by mines on route from South, are coming to his rescue. (Leaflets also dropped by rebel group prior to this.)

November 12 - A.M. (Cont.)

- 9:30 Sporadic machine gun and tank fire downtown, 2 staff members report.
- 9:40 Talk to Coster at USOM: heavy armor crossing river at Majestic. Probably part of southern troops; these troops are said to have orders from Diem to fire on any demonstrations; if so, heavy civilian casualties expected; already numerous casualties; Gardiner has been seeing Vice President Tho at his home; General Minh is with him.
- 9:50 Telephone report of troops crossing river at Majestic. Patrol boats did not fire on them. But are patrol boats with Diem or rebels?
- 10:00 Finkle's servant reports that was told at market that pro-Diem soldiers appeared, asked who was against Diem, and shot those who raised hand. Shelling near Palace much worse than yesterday.
- 10:10 One radio station (a different one than the rebels'?) broadcasts appeal from Diem for loyalty of soldiers. Sounds of people demonstrating for Diem in background. Soldiers told it's wise to return to Diem because he is stronger.
- 10:25 Fox's cook at Palace. Guns now pointed towards streets, not Palace. Cook was told troops now loyal to Diem. Bodies piled up in front of NIA. Troops from Tay Ninh came down by river.
- 10:30 Leaflet picked up at 9:30. From Diem: Group of officers and soldiers turned against; now turning back; don't worry; no blood; don't let Viet Cong profit. Radio station recaptured by Diem forces. 300 guns captured. A general made statement that would protect President at all costs. Bogardus via Baker indicates civil war in earnest soon. Troops massing in Dakao.
- 10:45 Don Aschom says received telephone call at office from John Griffin in Lansing. He will contact Coordinator to get messages that so far all safe to relatives of staff members.
- 10:45 Diem radio claims several signers of petition already killed, some others under arrest.
- 11:00 Jason talked to people operating sound truck (pro-Diem). They say anti-Diem forces still surround Palace, but pro-Diem forces are gathering all around the city for an assault.
- 11:05 Radio Hanoi is reported to claim American imperialists have taken over GVN.
- 11:07 Local radio under Diem, appealing to paratroopers not to fight but go back to barracks.
- 11:20 2 armored cars just went by.
- 11:30 Howard Thomas, Asia Foundation, thinks he has it on good authority that Col. Thi was in charge of Palace grounds at some point. A MAAG officer was in Palace and spoke to him. On less authoritative grounds has heard Diem cabinet ministers were arrested at one point.
- 11:31 MAAG man told Eleanor Fox there will probably be a big battle this afternoon between 2,000 paratroopers and 4,000 pro-Diem troops; stay in houses. Pauline Tho says she thinks it's all over and Government has won. Pauline and Philip in apartment; optimistic that no more fighting.

November 12 - A.M. (Cont.)

11:32 Sound trucks warning people to stay off streets.

11:50 Baker has word that there may not be battle. Part of paratroopers have already surrendered and rest are terribly fatigued.

11:25 Patrol coming on duty says that pro-Diem forces have taken over Camp des Mares and Police and Security Forces.

11:55 Meloy in Embassy: Last night rebels announced agreement with Diem for military representation in Cabinet; today situation reversed; some rebel troops have given in; this morning guns firing on civilian crowds opposed to Diem.

P.M.

12:30 New patrolman; if translation is understood, says all fighting is over.

12:40 Presidential hymn being played over radio.

1:00 Troops have begun going by house, single file, toward Pasteur.

1:57 Strecher and Turner arrive. Troops still filing past. Strecher and Turner report they are heading out Cong Ly, presumably to retake the airport. Radio said to claim everything retaken by Diem in Palace area.

2:00 Troops finally finish filing by.

2:10 Meloy, Embassy, thinks it's all over; paratroopers have surrendered in great numbers.

2:40 Dats arrive. Crowd at Palace gates at 9:00 a.m. Paratroopers fired warning shots to get crowd to duck. Shots from Palace. Diem forces killed many. (Paratroopers apparently had not taken Palace itself.) Failure of revolution apparently was mainly due to their hesitation. Last night Diem agreed to three conditions and General Ty made announcement of agreement.

3:00 Truong Vinh Le on radio. States that paratroopers are communists. As Chairman of Assembly states legislators doing everything for counter-revolution and for people. (These paratroopers are the same praised highly by government several days ago as the victors of Kontum.)

3:45 2 armored cars and 1 reconnaissance car went by; army troops.

4:15 Conlon, Embassy, says stay home; firing probably over, however.

4:15 Troops in 5 trucks came by heading toward Cholon; may be same ones that marched by toward airport at 1:00.

4:18 Col. Thi and others have flown to Bangkok, Novick says, according to Finkle. Finkle reports a shop being looted, near his house. (Note: it was a newspaper office that was actually being attacked.)

4:23 Bready, PAA, is thinking of returning to his house, next to Turners'. Mortar has been moved. He's heard rumor that paratroopers have moved to airport, taking Diem with them.

4:50 3 more truckloads of troopers went by, heading for Cholon.

November 12 - P.M. (Cont.)

5:10 Mrs. Crozier talked to McMurray, who says rebels have fallen apart. No rebels downtown. Still some fighting near airport, but Diem forces are expected to capture it. (Later heard they had probably captured it already through surrender of paratroopers there.)

Situation at Nightfall:

Few soldiers around Palace; most streets in city open but those around Palace still closed; normal traffic resuming, with police back directing traffic; some corpses still laid out in park near Palace; a few fighter planes patrolling, as during rebellion (now different pilots?); one plane dropped flares; no evidence of any preparations to renew fighting; Diem apparently firmly in control. How will he act toward the rebels and the people? What will be his governmental policy, his Cabinet? These and other questions await an answer.

10:10 News summary by Diem forces: Coup d'Etat failed. All public buildings recaptured and rebels repelled outside the city, the latter without serious clash. Military headquarters recaptured. Col. Khiem took over Saigon Military Region Command today at 3:00; also airport. Ordered all planes to be grounded or be fired on by planes coming from Bien Hoa. Paratroopers at airport urged to surrender without bloodshed. Rebellion began with attack at 3:30 a.m. At 10:00 a.m. President warned regional military commanders and ordered Col. Khiem at My Tho to report with armored brigade to Phu Lam. Afternoon of November 11 troops arrived at Phu Lam, 15 kilometers from Saigon. At 7:50 Col. Khiem arrived in city and surrounded Palace and paratroopers. Bien Hoa troops also came. Radio station and other buildings captured in forenoon of November 21. By noon rebels had either surrendered or fled. Lt. Col. Dang, responsible for rebellion, has escaped. Paratroopers surrendered airport at 5:00 p.m. after being surrounded. A popular anti-coup d'état committee has been formed. Committee is exhorting people to be calm. 24th, 7th and 5th divisions encircling rebels. They are to answer for their treason. A demonstration will be held later. Socialist party and Christian Workers Union alerted to this. Many rebels have surrendered, realizing they were deceived by their officers. Many were hungry, having been provided with no food. Some who have rejoined have been given food and have immediately attacked rebels. Assembly Committee says that rebels have fallen prey to communists. National Assembly completely condemns rebels and expresses confidence in President Diem and his struggle against communism. Prefect of Saigon has asked residents not to assemble, so that authorities can assure order. Anti-coup committee has urged populace not to harbor rebels. Those rebels who rejoin units in definite time will be welcomed. "Listeners at home and abroad, you have just heard of the failure of the abortive coup d'état. We bid you all, good-night."

November 13

A quiet dawn this time. Morning saw plane patrols, sound trucks, occasional movement of soldiers in trucks, police in jeeps. Several truckloads of young girls in uniform went by; the youth groups are apparently being rallied for demonstrations. Sureté required to participate in demonstration. A big parade of the faithful was held in mid-morning. The Palace gates were opened and the parade wound around the driveway to pay respects to the President on the balcony. Some demonstrators and members of crowd seemed quite lukewarm in expressions of support, it is reported. In the evening, word was received that most signers of petition circulated by civilians allied with military

November 13 (Cont.)

who revolted have been arrested. Some others as well. Rumor that Dr. Dan's house has been blown up. Col. Thi was forced down while trying to flee in his plane (later proved to be false rumor). The story on the 6:00 a.m. firing on November 12 is said to be that troops from the 5th Military District, who had arrived the previous afternoon, somehow convinced the paratroopers that they were on their side. Many paratroopers in the park near the Cercle Sportif were killed in the sudden attack and the rest in the park surrendered.