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*Le secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures
à la délégation à la Conférence sur le Laos à Genève*

*Secretary of State for External Affairs
to Delegation to Conference on Laos, Geneva*

TELEGRAM Y-277

Ottawa, May 17, 1961

SECRET. CANADIAN EYES ONLY. OPIMMEDIATE.

Reference: Washington Tel 1560 of May 15.†

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USA ASSISTANCE TO VIETNAM

For Canada the immediate problem arising from the USA plan to increase size and effectiveness of South Vietnamese forces and to strengthen assistance in social and economic fields will rise in connection with the decision to increase the number of MAAG personnel by 100 (paragraphs 6 and 7 of reference telegram).

2. U.S. MAAG was established in South Vietnam under a penta-lateral agreement of 1950 between USA, France and Indo-China states. At time of cease fire in 1954, there were 342 MAAG military instructors in South Vietnam along with 546 French military instructors making a total of 888. By 1956, all French instructors had been withdrawn along with French union forces thus seriously reducing training facilities available to South Vietnamese army. It is thus possible to argue that in keeping with spirit of Geneva settlement, South should be allowed to increase number of instructors to level existing at time of 1954 cease fire.

3. In 1958 and 1959 USA authorities approached us about an increase in MAAG personnel basing their case on improved fighting ability of North Vietnam since cease fire, deterioration of internal security in South and need for specialized training for South Vietnamese army to combat guerrilla tactics of subversive elements. At that time we pointed to certain legal difficulties arising from interpretation of Article 16 of the Cease Fire Agreement for Vietnam and indicated that in view of troubles in Laos, question of timing should be carefully examined to avoid heightening of tension and other complications such as request by North Vietnam that Commission withdraw.

4. Early in 1960, after consulting Canada, UK and India, Americans went ahead with their plan to increase MAAG personnel to a total of 685.

5. Commission was informed of decision by Foreign Minister of South Vietnam who argued that (a) increase was not contrary to spirit of Geneva agreement, (b) total of 685 USA instructors was well below total of 888 (USA and French) in South at time of cease fire, and (c) principle of replacement for military equipment authorized under Article 17 should logically be applied also to Article 16 dealing with military personnel. By Indian-Canadian majority, Commission decided to "note" that U.S. MAAG instructors were to be raised to 685 and to record its understanding "that additional U.S. military instructors would not be introduced except in conformity with procedures stipulated in Article 16(f) and (g) of Geneva Agreement." This decision which avoided any ceiling on military instructors led to vigorous protests by North including formal notes to Commission and to Co-Chairmen which were rejected on grounds that Commission had acted within its competence and that there was no appeal from its decision.