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FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1952–1954, INDOCHINA, VOLUME XIII, PART 1

751.5622/1-554

Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Drumright) to the Under Secretary of State (Smith)¹

[WASHINGTON,] January 5, 1954.

SECRET

Subject:

- French Ambassador's call with regard to additional aircraft and other facilities for Indochina.

The French Ambassador will presumably set forth the requirements stated on page 2 of Ambassador Heath's telegram 1151 of January 3,² a copy of which is attached.

It is recommended that you tell the Ambassador that the Department of Defense is actively canvassing the possibility of satisfying these new French requests and that it is hoped within a

very short time to have definitive answers. You might add that General Trapnell is now conferring with General Weyland of FEAF in Tokyo on this subject.

While emphasizing our earnest desire to be as helpful as possible, you may wish to suggest to Ambassador Bonnet that we are confident French air authorities will endeavor to make available additional French Air Force personnel not only for increased requirements of the current situation in Indochina but also to meet the long standing understating of maintenance and flight personnel which MAAG/Saigon has so frequently pointed out.³

For your information only: We should shortly have a report from Defense and from FEAF regarding additional planes and other equipment [Page 944] requested by the French. We are awaiting data regarding the possibility of making civilian flight crews available for the C-119s as was done last May. It may also be possible to secure civilian maintenance personnel.

We may be faced with a policy decision on whether to supply US Air Force maintenance personnel to maintain French Air Force combat and transport planes if these requirements cannot be met from other sources. Last spring, we sent a detachment of 25 men from Clark Field to Nha Trang primarily to maintain US owned C-47s which were on loan to the French Air Force. We have had small detachments of air force officers and men at Haiphong giving the French practical training in maintenance and in the use of heavy drop equipment. However, the use of USAF maintenance crews to perform routine maintenance functions for the French Air Force might represent a new departure and might therefore require a policy decision.

1. Drafted by Bonsal of PSA.↵
2. *Ante*, p. 937.↵
3. No memorandum of the conversation between Under Secretary Smith and French Ambassador Bonnet has been found in Department of State files. However, telegram 1190 to Saigon, Jan. 6, repeated to Paris for information as telegram 2416, indicated that the meeting occurred on Jan. 5. Smith assured the Ambassador that the United States was actively engaged in determining the extent to which further French aid requests could be met. The Under Secretary expressed the hope that the French Government would do its utmost to supply additional personnel to meet the existing crisis and to meet the longstanding understaffing of maintenance and flight personnel. (751G.00/1-354)↵

INDOCHINA

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PERSONS

[Bonnet, Henri](#)

[Bonsal, Philip W.Drumright, Everett F.Heath, Donald R.Smith, General](#)

[Walter BedellTrappnell, Major General Thomas J. H.](#)

ABBREVIATIONS & TERMS

[FEAF](#)

[MAAGPSAUSAF](#)

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