

*See R. Campbell to
Mr. & pass to Mr. Hayler
H. G. W.*

Japan: U.S. Relations 6204/63 1/4

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THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

Mr. Deane

November 6, 1941

Confidential

Wesley 10/6

*Copy sent J.S.M. 12/21/41
(Mr. Hayler's instructions)*

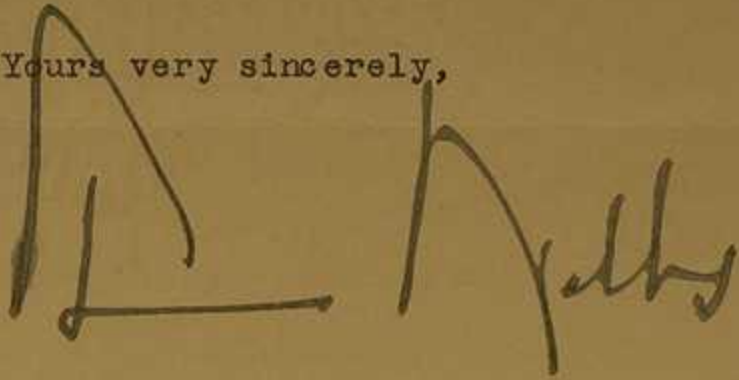
SECRET

My dear Lord Halifax:

I am enclosing for your information a paraphrase
of a secret message which the President has received
from Mr. Churchill.

Believe me

Yours very sincerely,



Enclosure:
Paraphrase.

His Excellency
The Right Honorable
The Viscount Halifax, K.G.,
British Ambassador.

PARAPHRASE OF TELEGRAM RECEIVED

FROM: American Embassy, London.

DATED: November 5, 1941

A. There is attached an appeal for air assistance, addressed to us both, from Chiang-Kai-Shek. As to our air strength at Singapore, you are fully familiar. However, if they could arrive in time, I should be prepared to send pilots and even some planes.

B. A deterrent of the most general and formidable character is needed now. You spoke of gaining time when we talked about this at Placentia and so far this policy has been brilliantly successful. However, although the Japanese have not as yet taken a final decision and although the Emperor appears to be exercising restraint, our joint embargo is steadily forcing the Japanese to choose between war and peace.

C. Should the Japanese go into Yunnan and cut the Burma Road, as now appears probable, the consequences for Chiang-Kai-Shek would be disastrous. Not only would the collapse of his resistance be a world tragedy, but there would be left for the Japanese large forces for attack either to the south or to the north.

D. We have received from the Chinese, as I believe you have, an appeal to communicate a warning against an attack in Yunnan to the Japanese. It is my hope that you might remind them that such an attack, aimed at China from

a region in which we have never recognized that the Japanese have any right to maintain forces, would be in direct opposition to the clearly indicated attitude of the United States. Of course a similar warning would be given by us.

E. As we are so much tied up elsewhere, Japan will not be deterred by any independent action on our part. In whatever course you choose, of course, we will stand with you and do our utmost to back you. In my opinion, Japan is more likely to drift into war than to go in headlong. What are your views?

The Prime Minister received on November 2, 1941, the following message from General Chiang Kai-shek:

Information in which I have complete confidence shows that in order to take Kunming and to cut China's lines of communication with Great Britain and the United States of America, the Japanese are determined upon an attack against Yunnan from Indochina. An attack may be expected very shortly as preparations are already on foot. In my estimation this is the first step in their policy of expansion either to the south or to the north. As much of the future lies in your hands I feel it my duty and right to impress certain facts and aspects of the situation upon you.

a. The Japanese would be rid of all fear of attack in the rear once Kunming is taken. I am sure you will be the first to see that its capture is a first and necessary step to free Japan for American enterprises and not merely one objective of her war of aggression on China. The vital bearing of the coming battle upon the safety of all the countries in the Pacific--upon yourselves and ourselves alike--is apparent to you.

b. I need not tell you that you may count upon me to do my utmost to defend Kunming, and believe me when I tell you that it can be done by my armies. However, you know as well as I that I have no air force, and without an air force, what can our army do against another that has air strength? If the city falls, China will be cut off from supplies from outside, her armies encircled and deprived of all contact with yours and those of her other friends, as a glance at the map will show, and furthermore, the morale of the Chinese armies and people will be shaken to the core. On the eastern fronts where the help of our friends cannot directly reach us, our morale has stood for more than four years. A Japanese triumph on the one front where, as all know, the armed forces of our friends are at hand, would gravely menace that morale. A real collapse of resistance would be possible for the first time in our long war.

The five million men which China has kept in the field for more than four years now have immobilized Japan's man-power. You, and all other friends of China, I am sure, recognize the implications of this. Japan would be able to cast all caution away and turn her whole might elsewhere if Kunming fell. Therefore, not only the victory or defeat of China, but the peace and security of the Pacific hangs upon the outcome of this battle. It may indeed be the determining point of the whole war. I should be making no appeal to you if China had the air force she needs because I should feel confident of my ability to defeat the enemy. It is certain that Japan will use her fine (group indecipherable) and I have nothing I can call an air force to pit against what they would bring to bear upon me. Japan's power to enter upon what I have called fresh enterprises will be much diminished if her air force can be checked or even smashed in this battle. While her navy, it is true, will remain to her, there is little she can do with it, lacking strength in the air, and thus her schemes of expansion would be ended. Following that, political and economic pressure could bring about her submission. Let us not therefore make the same mistakes as (group undecipherable: question mark have) been made elsewhere in this war and let Japan attack us one after the other as is their

intention. A declaration of war by you upon Japan is not what I have in mind. It is merely (group undecipherable: question mark endeavor to) leave you in no doubt about the situation in which I find myself, to make it clear that I am no match for the enemy in the air, to tell you what this means, and to suggest a course of action. While the American volunteer air force now under training is good, it is not large. The British air force in Malay and American cooperation in support of the American volunteer and existing Chinese air force constitute our only hope. If the British air force could cooperate as a part of Chinese air force or assume the role of an international volunteer force, the result would be to save the Pacific and to save China.

At first glance you might feel that at a time when you are fighting with such courage in Europe and the Middle East this would involve you in a war with Japan. As I see it (?). In my belief Japan does not feel that she has the strength to attack so long as the resistance of China continues. However, once she is rid of this, whether or not she is given a pretext by such action on your part, she will attack you as and when it suits her. The importance of British air action in Yunnan cannot be minimized for the fate of the democratic cause will turn upon events in North China. The most critical phase of

China's war of resistance has now arrived. British and American willingness to cooperate in the defense of Yunnan will determine primarily China's ability to defend her approaches to Singapore and Burma. We shall be cut off from you and the whole structure of your own air and naval coordination with America and the Netherlands East Indies will be gravely threatened in new ways and from a new direction if the Japanese can break our front here.

With all the strength at my command I wish to express the feeling that wisdom and foresight demand that China be given the help that I have outlined.

In no other way can the defeat of Japan and the success of countries now resisting aggression be ensured.

Your reply is awaited eagerly.