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OCI No. 1135/66

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Office of Current Intelligence  
7 April 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Political Situation in South Vietnam  
(As of 2:00 P.M.)

1. Disturbances were continuing in Saigon as of 11:30 P.M (Vietnam time) this evening. US military officials have reported that there are smaller and more numerous bands--which puts a burden on security forces--and that they are engaged primarily in hoodlumism. One motorcycle and one US truck has been burned. In addition, one unknown caucasian has been abducted by the demonstrators.

2. According to General Khang, commander of the Capital Military Region, refugee Catholics from the North are reportedly planning to send "tens of thousands" of persons into Saigon within two or three days to stage anti-Buddhist demonstrations, and to attack Buddhist pagodas and newspapers. Khang indicated that security forces now in the capital are inadequate to cope with such large numbers. Despite earlier Catholic statements criticizing the government but urging calm, there are now some indications of growing Catholic concern over the Buddhist campaign, including an anti-Communist demonstration near Saigon by northern Catholic youths last week end.

3. Buddhist Institute chairman Tam Chau, interpreting for US officials the communique which was made public earlier today, has confirmed that Buddhist demands still hinge on the creation of a popularly elected assembly. The government's version of this assembly is that it will be composed of an equal number of municipal and provincial council representatives and of appointees. Despite the exchange of letters and communiqes between the Buddhists and the government expressing agreement "in principle", their positions still differ fundamentally on the composition

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of an assembly. Premier Ky, who thus far has alternated threats of force in Da Nang and promises of concessions to the Buddhists in Saigon, may now be tempted to follow up on the former, in view of growing mutual suspicions.

4. The situation remains fluid in Da Nang, although the city was quiet at 11:30 P.M. (Vietnam time). US military officials have reported that elements of the Vietnamese Air Force may attempt to seize a small Vietnamese army communications post outside the city sometime tonight.

some of the junior officers in the progovernment forces at the airfield are becoming increasingly impatient for action.

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5. General Khang has provided further evidence of strains within the military Directorate. He said that several senior officers were disturbed by the government's lack of action against the Da Nang dissidents, by Ky's seeming efforts to accommodate the Buddhists. Khang identified this "hawk" element as himself, General Thieu, Chief of the Joint General Staff Vien, III Corps commander Tri, and IV Corps commander Quang. Lending weight to a growing split in the Directorate is a report from Da Nang that General Co has been at least partially convinced by I Corps commander Chuan that the "struggle movement" has some justification and some chance of succeeding. Co reportedly intends to remain in Da Nang until the Marines from Saigon are withdrawn from the air base.

6. A demonstration of some 3,000 persons was reported in the provincial capital of Quang Tri today--the largest there to date. In addition, the province chief told a US official that he felt a change in the national government had become inevitable.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Office of Current Intelligence  
7 April 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Political Situation in South Vietnam  
(As of 10:00 A.M.)

1. Tension rose again in Da Nang today, as antigovernment forces prepared to defend against an air attack and a possible movement of government troops from the air base. Late press reports state that calm is returning to the city, with traffic now moving through the roadblocks and at least some of the troops returning to their quarters.

2. The municipal radio station in Da Nang, under antigovernment control, began broadcasting alert messages at about 2:00 P.M. this afternoon (Vietnam time), ordering the troops to man their roadblocks and anti-aircraft positions, and to guard the river approaches to the city. A preliminary report from US military officials stated that a red alert--the highest state of combat readiness--had been passed to the I Corps Vietnamese military headquarters shortly thereafter. The call for the alert came from elements of the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) stationed at Da Nang Air Base. The reason for the alert has not been determined, but it may have been prompted by the aerial observation of antigovernment troop movements in the city.

3. In the city of Da Nang, Deputy Premier General Co and I Corps commander General Chuan reportedly stated that VNAF aircraft had been constantly circling the city during the day. General Chuan claimed that he had asked for this to stop, but that the aircraft had continued their flights. Both Co and Chuan are apparently continuing their efforts to arrange a peaceful solution. According to the press, Chuan stated that the dissident groups in Da Nang would return control of the radio station to the government

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providing that they were allowed some broadcasting time, and that general order would be restored in the city providing the Vietnamese Marine battalions were sent back to Saigon.

4. Meanwhile, the continued deployment of government troops at the air base remains unresolved. According to US military officials, one Vietnamese Marine battalion was scheduled to return to Saigon today, but the movement was cancelled when the alert condition was declared. However, General Westmoreland has also reported that Premier Ky today requested that two additional Vietnamese Ranger battalions be airlifted to the Da Nang Air Base immediately. General Westmoreland held the request in abeyance pending clarification, and according to a later report, Premier Ky cancelled his request.

5. Dissident military elements in I Corps are apparently sounding out other Vietnamese military commanders for support. [redacted]

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6. Violence, underway in the streets of Saigon for the fourth consecutive night, is assuming uglier forms according to press reports. Various bands of demonstrators today reportedly burned a US military jeep, beat an American serviceman, and stoned a US military billet. Police and government troops are on hand, and apparently are using all means at their disposal to curb the violence.

7. A Buddhist Institute communique signed by chairman Tam Chau and issued earlier today called for the temporary cessation of all forms of the "struggle" to allow Premier Ky to confirm publicly prior verbal agreements made with Buddhist leaders. According to the press, the thrust of the Buddhist demand was that Ky fully confirm his promise to yield power to a popularly elected constituent assembly within five or six months. The communique also requested amnesty for those involved in the antigovernment movement.

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8. Elsewhere, a small demonstration was reported today in Hoi An south of Da Nang; other information indicates that Buddhists in Ban Me Thuot, in the central highlands, may soon recommence demonstrations there. In northern I Corps, US military advisors have reportedly rejoined the Vietnamese First Division with the exception of one regiment. [redacted]

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[redacted] some 120 local students are receiving several days training at a Popular Forces training center. Banners identified the group as "student suicide troops." The purpose and other details of the program were not clear, even to the deputy commander of the training center. First Division commander General Nhuan had assured US officials earlier that students and other local civilians would not be armed during the current period of unrest.

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