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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

## Intelligence Report

### *The Situation in South Vietnam* (Weekly)

**Secret**

143

17 July 1967  
No. 0359/67

## WARNING

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence

THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM  
(10 July - 16 July 1967)

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## I. POLITICAL SITUATION

The Provisional National Assembly is scheduled to take final action on 18 and 19 July on the presidential candidates whose credentials have been challenged. Premier Ky was reported to be still uncertain as of 10 July about whether or not to fully pledge his existing campaign apparatus to the Thieu-Ky ticket. The leading civilian candidates are said to be more sanguine about their chances to win against Thieu than against the former Ky slate. Following the military meetings between 28 and 30 June, the locus of power in the military establishment has shifted somewhat to the corps commanders. The original 64 senate slates are expected to be pared down, possibly by as much as one third, by 22 July.

### Presidential Candidates

1. On 18 July, the Provisional National Assembly is scheduled to deliberate on the final status of presidential nominees whose candidacies have been challenged. The Central Election Council forwarded its recommendations to the special assembly committee on elections on 15 July, advising that General Duong Van ("Big") Minh be disqualified because his running mate, Tran Ngoc Lieng, once held French citizenship. The presidential election law stipulates that candidates must have been Vietnamese citizens since birth.

2. In addition, according to a member of the special assembly committee, the council recommended that six slates be approved and nine disqualified, including that of "peace" candidate Au Truong Thanh and eight other minor tickets. No recommendation was made on the slates of three candidates, including Chief of State Thieu, but the source believes these will be approved by the special committee when it presents its own recommendations, in turn, to the full assembly. Representatives of each slate are to meet separately with the committee on 16 and 17 July. Final posting of the approved slates will be on 19 July.

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3. Although committee chairman Nguyen Thanh Vinh had earlier indicated that the committee would probably approve Minh's candidacy, the Central Election Council's recommendation, while not binding, may prove decisive. The charge against Lieng is apparently legal and is supported by documentary evidence--a copy of a 24 February 1950 decree signed by then French premier Georges Bidault granting Lieng French citizenship. The council's move in making Lieng, rather than Minh, the victim will allow the government and the assembly to remove a thorn in their sides without danger of making a martyr of Minh personally.

4. If Minh's candidacy is nonetheless approved, it may be because some members of the Democratic Alliance Bloc (DAB) in the assembly, which was decidedly pro-Ky until a few weeks ago, are piqued at Ky and may not echo his sentiments that Minh should be disqualified. Some of the DAB members reportedly claim that Ky has reneged on a number of promises to reciprocate for legislation they enacted at his request. It was only through DAB efforts, they contend, that Ky was able to enter the presidential race, since other assembly deputies had favored a 40-year age minimum for candidates--which would have eliminated the 37-year-old Ky. Bloc members were reportedly angered that Ky did not consult them before agreeing to become Chief of State Thieu's running mate, and they feel that Ky does not take them seriously or regard them as equal parts of the "team."

5. If the assembly approves Minh's candidacy, the election will shape up primarily as a contest among the four leaders--Thieu, Minh, Tran Van Huong, and Phan Khac Suu--with Ha Thuc Ky drawing off the Dai Viet vote in Central Vietnam and the four remaining candidates probably trailing far behind. At this point, any prediction of how the vote will go is conjecture, but some factors likely to influence the electorate are emerging. One possibility, in the wake of the Thieu-Ky combination, would be a polarization of the vote on the basis of the military versus the civilians, although Minh's candidacy might offset this to some extent.

6. In General Thieu's favor would be the fact that his three major opponents are from the delta,

which would tend to split the southern vote. The consequences of Minh's candidacy, whether he remains in exile or manages to return to Saigon, are difficult to gauge, although Thieu, Huong, and Suu alike have exhibited some fear of what his appeal would do to their chances of winning. Minh might coalesce a great deal of the Buddhist vote, but there is little indication now that the electorate is divided along strictly religious--Buddhist versus Catholic--lines. At present, it appears that the most decisive influence on the voting may be the methods and thoroughness that the Thieu-Ky forces finally bring to bear during the month of official campaigning prior to 3 September.

Thieu-Ky Campaign Apparatus

7. As of 10 July, Ky was still uncertain about whether to pledge his full campaign apparatus to the support of the Thieu-Ky ticket, according to an American observer who talked with him. Ky said that he would be considering in the next few days whether to reactivate the organization. Although he probably wants to resurrect it, he implied that he is waiting to work out the specifics of sharing future responsibilities with Thieu should the latter be elected president. In Ky's opinion, the success or failure of the Thieu-Ky slate in the election rests on his decision. Ky sent his former campaign manager, Social Welfare Minister Nguyen Xuan Phong, to Thieu on 7 July to discuss the campaign organization, [REDACTED] 25X1X  
[REDACTED] Phong reported back that Thieu had no funds, no platform, no workers, and no campaign manager and would have to rely on Ky's facilities.

25X1X

8. Ky's embryonic political "front," however, which was originally conceived as a public vehicle for his own presidential campaign, has decided to support the Thieu-Ky ticket, [REDACTED] 25X1X

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[REDACTED] On 10 July, a 13-man working group of representatives from factions of the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao religious sects, a faction of the VNQDD political party, and an association of young "professionals" laid the groundwork for a national convention of the "front" in early August. Ky has already reportedly given two million piasters to the "front" and has authorized an addition five million piasters to be allocated through

Police Director Loan. Although the group claims it can deliver two million votes to Thieu and Ky, it is not clear how much support these representatives actually have with their locally based parent organizations. They probably are overstating the extent of their influence.

9. In addition, Ky is apparently preparing to move the police apparatus into operation again. He told an American observer in Da Lat on 15 July that he intended to meet on the 16th in the resort city with approximately 100 provincial police chiefs and security officials to give them instructions on how the elections are to be held and what the role of the police should be. He is downgrading the role of Police Director Loan, asserting that Loan's statements and actions in connection with political matters "should not be taken as definitive," and he has told Loan to "keep his mouth shut" on political subjects.

#### Reaction of Civilian Candidates to Thieu-Ky Ticket

10. The reaction of the leading civilian presidential candidates to the Thieu-Ky ticket is mixed but generally optimistic, according to sources close to them. Tran Van Huong's supporters believe that his chance of winning has been enhanced because the opportunity for honest elections will be better and because voters will view the Thieu-Ky slate as "more of the same." They also think that Ky's campaign organization will not function as effectively for Thieu. Huong's colleagues are reportedly somewhat concerned, however, that "Big" Minh will draw votes away from Huong if the Provisional National Assembly allows Minh to run.

11. In apparent reaction to the Thieu-Ky coalition, attempts have been made by both the Huong and Phan Khac Suu camps to form an alliance with Ha Thuc Ky, the Revolutionary Dai Viet candidate who is expected to control a significant bloc of voters in northern South Vietnam. One of the Dai Viet party members has reported that both proposals were rejected. At the same time, Huong and Suu have agreed "in principle" not to criticize each other during the campaign and to cooperate in establishing the new government if either wins, according to Vo Long Trieu, one of Huong's campaign organizers.

12. At least one significant organization, the Greater Solidarity Force comprising northern refugee Catholics, is not now certain which ticket it will support, having previously voted to back the expected ticket of Premier Ky and Nguyen Van Loc. In addition, the central committee of the Hoa Hao religious sect, which had appeared likely to support Ky's candidacy, is again engaged in internecine squabbling, although it is not clear how directly this is related to the issue of support for Thieu and Ky. In any event, it is apparent that the major blocs of political and religious strength are reassessing their allegiances in the light of the military ticket headed by Thieu as well as of the meaning of "Big" Minh's re-emergence on the Saigon political scene.

Consequences of Thieu-Ky Presidential Alliance

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13. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] there is no agreement, written or oral, on the delineation of power between Thieu and Ky as president and vice president. [REDACTED]

Thieu would not have agreed to such an arrangement without the approval of the Directorate, suggesting that the key military members are not aware of any such deal. Ky is nonetheless beginning to think about his own cabinet preferences, should the Thieu-Ky ticket win. During his weekend stay in Da Lat, he told an American observer, he planned to discuss with several of his political advisers the composition of the future cabinet, concentrating particularly on such important positions as defense, foreign affairs, information, economy and finance, and revolutionary development.

25X1X

25X1X

14. [REDACTED]

the locus of power in the wake of the 28-30 June military meetings is defense chief Cao Van Vien and the four corps commanders along with Ky and Thieu. These men now constitute the decision-making group within the Directorate as well as within the larger group of influential generals which includes Information Minister Tri, Revolutionary Development Minister Thang, Security Minister Vien, Planning and Development Minister Quang, and Directorate Secretary General Chieu. [REDACTED] if Thieu and Ky are elected, Cao Van Vien will probably be named defense minister, General Khang will probably be requested to take Vien's job as chairman of the Joint General Staff, and General

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Thang will probably be offered a command position, leaving his pacification job. General Tri will probably lose his information portfolio and, beyond that, his future is "dark," in the source's opinion.

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15. [REDACTED] the Directorate has not settled on a future prime minister, but that the consensus is for a southern civilian. Ky previously stated that he will name the prime minister and announce the choice before the election.

Review of Senate Slates

16. Nine of the original 64 senate slates filed with the Provisional National Assembly on 30 June have been withdrawn or disqualified by the Central Election Council. Complaints had been filed against 19 slates and these are now being reviewed by the council, with a final decision on the eligibility of all slates to be made by 22 July. Elimination of five of the nine already disqualified was based on evidence of Communist connections with some of the candidates, while the remaining four slates either filed late or had incomplete dossiers.

17. Among the more important complaints under review are those against Le Phuoc Sang and Le Quang Liem, both prominent Provisional National Assembly deputies running on a slate headed by cabinet minister La Thanh Nghe. Sang, head of the Democratic Alliance Bloc, is charged with having been an army deserter, and Liem has been accused of corrupt practices during his term as Khanh Hoa Province chief. Other complaints include those against retired Generals Tran Van Don and Ton That Dinh for alleged pro-French neutralist and pro-Communist activities; against three candidates, running on two different slates, for Communist connections; and against five civilian Directorate members, running on five different tickets, for not having taken a leave of absence from the Directorate before filing. Included among these Directorate members is Foreign Minister Tran Van Do.

18. The disqualification of any one candidate for pro-Communist activities results in the elimination of the entire 10-man slate, but disqualification for reasons other than pro-Communism does not necessarily affect the rest of the slate.

Communist Call for Election Boycott

19. The Viet Cong broadcast on 2 July an appeal to residents of the Saigon-Cholon area to boycott the 3 September presidential and senate elections. A similar appeal was broadcast to the region east of Saigon on 10 July. These appeals have been accompanied by a number of Liberation Radio and Radio Hanoi broadcasts terming the election a farce and accusing Thieu and Ky of acting only at the behest of the US.

## II. REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT

Several changes have been made at the Saigon headquarters level of the National Police. National Police Director Loan, having been divested of his position as chief of the Military Security Service, may attempt to tighten up control of the police organization. As the result of the exploitation of four members of the Communists' Region 4 Intellectuals' Proselyting Section (IPS), 32 additional individuals associated with the IPS have been neutralized. In the first six months of 1967 the Communists initiated 521 incidents against the Revolutionary Development Cadres. In the fall of 1967, Australia will reportedly augment its military forces in South Vietnam with a 45-man helicopter detachment. As of 30 June, 18,145 persons had rallied to the government in 1967 under the Chieu Hoi or "Open Arms" program.

### National Police

1. On 27 June Brigadier General Nguyen Ngoc Loan was divested of his position as chief of the Military Security Service (MSS). Loan, however, is remaining as the director general of National Police (DGNP). Lieutenant Colonel Tran Van Thang, who has been Loan's deputy both for the MSS and for the National Police, has been named acting chief of the MSS. Bui Van Nhu, formerly a Police Special Branch (PSB) officer, has been appointed as the deputy DGNP.

2. Another high-level police change took place recently when Major Nguyen Thien was appointed the chief of the Police Special Branch at the National Police Headquarters level. According to reports, Thien plans to tighten PSB control over provincial and district branches by establishing a clear

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chain of command from Saigon through the regions and provinces to the districts. At present, a PSB chain of command is almost nonexistent and the Saigon headquarters exercises little or no effective control over province and district PSB personnel and operations. PSB personnel reportedly are assigned to each government district and to all Saigon precincts, but their numbers--as well as their employment--depend on the provincial police chief and, to an even greater extent, on the provincial chief.

3. Some Vietnamese security officials are reported to feel that a number of province chiefs who have recently been assigned to their jobs directly from the army either lack understanding of PSB activities or are generally hostile to the police. It is not yet known what factors Thien may be able to bring to bear to ensure headquarter's control of provincial PSB personnel and their operations, but if Thien is sincere in his desire to make some improvements, he faces a tough, uphill fight in any effort to loosen or restrict the province chiefs' control of police assets in the provinces.

4. The removal of General Loan as chief of the MSS is partially attributed to pressures applied to Ky by his colleagues to reduce the power and authority of Loan, particularly as Loan's use of the police and MSS organizations to further Ky's political ambitions has become generally known. Loan indicated as much in a conversation with the CORDS Public Safety advisor on 4 July, and said that he had chosen to remain head of the National Police (NP) rather than the MSS. He insisted that in the future he would operate only as a civilian police official and that his job would have "nothing to do with politics." He further stated that he had even submitted his resignation from the air force, but he did not know whether it would be accepted. Perhaps in an effort to ward off criticism that the influx of military officers--in particular MSS officers--into the National Police is having a deleterious effect on police morale and efficiency, Loan reportedly plans to order all military officers assigned to the police to resign their commissions for the duration of their police service.

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5. Although Loan, presumably on Premier Ky's order, has reportedly instructed provincial police chiefs temporarily to disengage themselves from police activities, there are indications that Loan may continue to be the primary person through whom Ky channels funds to his political organizations and supporters. In addition, although no longer the titular head of the MSS, Loan stated in a recent conversation with a US military officer that MSS acting chief Thang--whom Loan described as a good man but a person who has difficulty in making hard decisions--would still be receiving "advice" from Loan from time to time.

6. General Loan has intimated on several occasions that he believes that some US officials apparently do not like him and may be partly responsible for the events which forced him to relinquish one of his security commands. Early this year, Loan apparently terminated several joint operations between MSS and MACV, and, should he become convinced that Americans are behind the recent curbs on his authority, he may also become less cooperative with the US in National Police operations.

Additional Arrests of Members of the Communist Infrastructure in the Saigon Area

7. Government exploitation of four members of the Communists' Region 4 Intellectual's Proselyting Section (IPS) who were apprehended between January and May 1967 has almost certainly weakened the enemy's operational assets in the Saigon area, particularly in the civilian sector. As the result of information derived from one of the four, who is alleged to be the deputy chief of the IPS, 32 additional individuals associated with the IPS have been identified and neutralized and at least five have been arrested.

8. The alleged deputy chief of the IPS, Le Ngoc Lan, has stated that the IPS was established in mid-1966, although Le Thi Rieng--a Region 4 committee member who was concurrently chief of the Women's Proselyting Section and a member of the

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"National Liberation Front" central committee--has stated that the IPS was in existence at least as early as 1965. Lan testified that the purpose of the IPS was to win over influential political and religious personalities in the Saigon area, in anticipation of a future political situation in which a cease-fire and negotiations would take place and a coalition government would be established. He suggested no time frame for such developments, however.

9. At the time of Lan's arrest in May 1967, 11 agents and 21 sympathizers were working for or associated with the IPS, according to Lan; at least five of these individuals have since been apprehended. Of the 11 agents, who Lan claimed performed regularly assigned missions, seven were regarded by the Communists as possible candidates for future cabinet positions. Lan described these persons as essentially bourgeois, anti-Communist intellectuals who were susceptible to Communist appeals because of their intense nationalism and their opposition to "foreign intervention." In approaching potential sympathizers, the IPS member or agent concentrated on persuasive techniques and propaganda and, in many instances, carried out a prolonged development period to avoid any alienation and to ensure future political usefulness of the potential asset.

10. A number of the people alleged by Lan to be involved in IPS activities are judges, lawyers, former teachers, and engineers, some of whom are influential, respected members of the Saigon community. The South Vietnamese Government has thus far been especially careful in handling prominent individuals being questioned on the basis of the information provided by Lan. Police officials now expect the number of persons apprehended on the basis of Lan's testimony to reach approximately 40. They claim that they will proceed carefully with such arrests and will hold only those individuals who prove to be card-carrying Communist Party members, probably no more than ten individuals. These party members, if detained after a review of the evidence by the National Security Council, will be held for no more than three years in a re-education camp. Non-party members arrested will be held, according to the

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police, only long enough to give statements on their association with Le Ngoc Lan and will then be released if they promise to sever their connections with the Communists and to report any subsequent approaches by them.

Incidents Directed Against Revolutionary Development Cadres

11. The following is a breakdown of Communist-initiated incidents directed against Revolutionary Development (RD) cadres for the first six months of 1967:

	<u>I Corps</u>	<u>II Corps</u>	<u>III Corps</u>	<u>IV Corps</u>	<u>Totals</u>
January	22	12	6	5	45
February	8	14	13	13	48
March	62	17	17	30	126
April	56	23	16	15	110
May	33	16	16	18	83
June	<u>38</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>109</u>
	219	115	79	108	521

12. During the first half of the year the Rd cadres suffered combat losses of 333 killed and 573 wounded. The field strength of the RD cadres on 1 June--Vietnamese and Trong San RD and Static Census Grievance--stood at 34,026 with an additional 5,217 persons in training at the Vung Tau and Pleiku training centers.

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Third Country Assistance

13. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the Australian Government has approved sending in the fall of 1967 a Royal Australian Navy (RAN) helicopter detachment to

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augment allied forces in the Republic of Vietnam. The 45-man RAN detachment will include pilots and maintenance personnel and will probably be integrated into the US Army's 135th Aviation Company which is to be established in the vicinity of the Dat Mountain--the base camp headquarters of the Australian Army in Phuoc Tuy Province--in October 1967.

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### III. ECONOMIC SITUATION

Retail prices in Saigon jumped five percent during the week ending 3 July after declining steadily during most of June. Free market currency and gold prices declined on 3 July. US officials feel that the viewpoint of the current top GVN economic officials presents an opportunity to start moving away from government economic controls and ownership toward increased use of private enterprise for the economic development of Vietnam.

#### Prices

1. Retail prices in Saigon jumped five percent during the week ending 3 June after declining steadily during most of June. The USAID weekly index reached a level 27 percent higher than at the beginning of the year, the highest level since the rice crisis in March. Prices of most foods, including rice, rose, but particularly large increases were registered for protein foods, especially pork and shrimp. According to the embassy, the wholesale price of hogs at the Saigon slaughterhouse rose steadily during the week, probably because of increased shipments to the provinces north of Saigon where pork prices are higher. Officials noted that the increase in Saigon prices was not, as in the past, brought on by low deliveries from the delta; arrivals have continued to be ample. The increase in shrimp and fish prices may in part have resulted from shortages caused by the mining of Route 14 from Vung Tau on 3 July. Nonfood prices rose slightly as a sharp rise in bus fares more than offset declines in the prices of charcoal and firewood. (A table of weekly retail prices in Saigon is included in the Annex.)

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2. The wholesale price index for US-financed imported commodities fell sharply on 5 July for the second consecutive week. The prices of galvanized iron sheets continued to decline in response to the release of new imports on 27 June. The price of cement declined for the third week in succession, falling below the official price on 5 July. Supplies of cement reportedly are ample and consumption is down because of the rainy season.

#### Currency and Gold

3. Free market currency and gold prices declined on 3 July compared with the previous week. The price of dollars fell four piasters to 154 piasters per dollar. The price of gold declined three piasters to 192 piasters per dollar, the lowest price since the fall of 1965. The rate for MPC (scrip) fell to 111 piasters per dollar, two piasters below the level of the previous week and seven piasters below the official rate. (A graph on monthly and weekly currency and gold rates is included in the Annex.)

#### GVN's View of Its Role in the Economy

4. US officials in Washington and Saigon feel that the viewpoint of current top GVN economic officials presents an opportunity to start moving away from government economic controls and ownership toward increased use of private enterprise for the economic development of Vietnam. According to an embassy study, the second most serious factor, after the war itself, blocking Vietnam's progress is a legacy of outmoded and misguided public philosophy toward business and the economic system in general. The traditional Vietnamese philosophy of government is that "the government knows best" and that a country is best run from the center by an educated elite, an elite never defined to include businessmen. Most high Vietnamese officials view their role as "running things"--seeing that rules and orders are promulgated to direct and control, fairly minutely, all activities of the economy, whether they be movements of goods, entry into business, prices, or ordering a new piece of machinery. They feel that businessmen and business in general cannot be trusted and see their responsibility as one of controlling these elements for the

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public good. The trend has continued toward increased government interference in the economy, and the US, under the pressures of war and expediency, has unwittingly furthered this trend by adopting policies that involve the government more deeply in the operation of the economy. According to the embassy, the clichés that government direction and ownership lead to favoritism, lassitude, and inefficiency apply with a vengeance in Vietnam.

5. American officials believe that the future economic development of Vietnam depends heavily on a new public philosophy which will give significant scope to the private sector. They hope this can be accomplished through the introduction of US-trained officials, the institution of training in modern business management, and US support for private investments and institutions. Finally, they believe that a new attitude will prevail if individuals who espouse it are successful and survive in public life in Vietnam. According to the embassy, the two top economic officials, National Bank Governor Hanh and his deputy Pham Kim Ngoc, both believe in using and developing the private sector and are the first such officials since independence who have had these views. Ngoc particularly insists on involving businessmen in government decisions and he apparently is determined to break down restrictive government regulations so that goods can move freely, investments can be made without lengthy red tape, and people can enter business freely. As reported earlier, he has already proposed eliminating restrictions on the movement of hogs from the provinces to Saigon.

6. USAID has drawn up a preliminary outline of actions it hopes will foster the development of private enterprise in Vietnam. These include such things as production targets for agriculture throughout the country, negotiation of a contract with an American university to expand university training in business administration, and feasibility studies for major projects and industry areas and for the establishment of a stock exchange. USAID also will cooperate with Governor Hanh in trying to sell many of the 49 public and semipublic corporations with which the GVN is involved to private persons. These

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and other ideas which USAID hopes to put into effect will depend greatly on the composition of the new government to be elected this fall, but the Americans in Saigon believe that now is the time to begin.

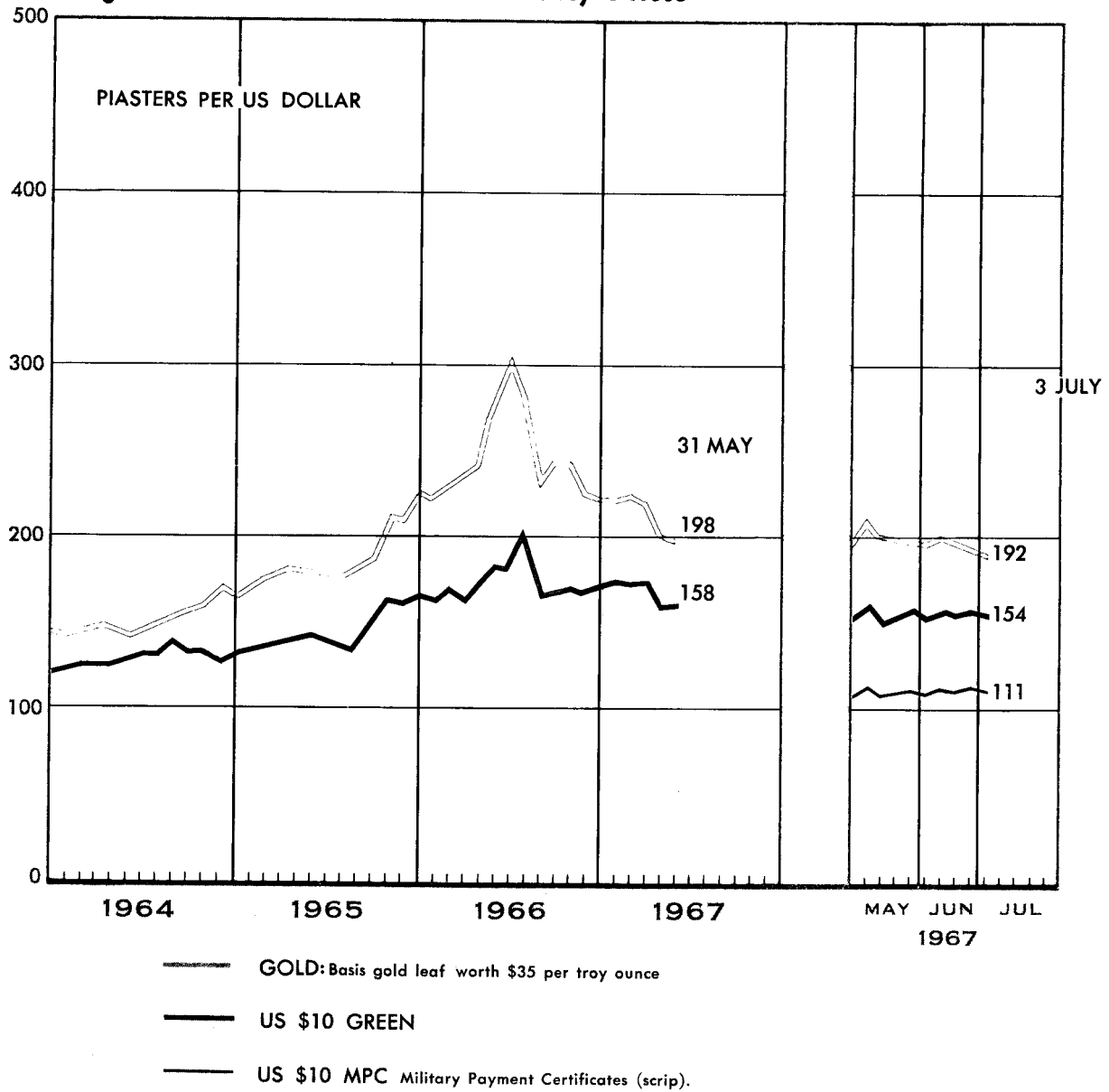
TABLE

Weekly Retail Prices in Saigon a/

	13 June 1966 <u>b/</u>	3 Jan. 1967	12 June 1967	19 June 1967	26 June 1967	3 July 1967
Index for All Items	<u>173</u>	<u>225</u>	<u>269</u>	<u>267</u>	<u>267</u>	<u>280</u>
Index for Food Items	<u>190</u>	<u>242</u>	<u>295</u>	<u>293</u>	<u>293</u>	<u>314</u>
Of Which: (In Piasters)						
Rice-Soc Nau (100 kg.)	1,250	1,700	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,500
Pork Bellies (1 kg.)	90	130	160	170	150	180
Fish-Ca Tre (1 kg.)	130	150	160	160	180	200
Nuoc Mam (jar)	70	90	150	150	150	150
Index for Nonfood Items	<u>140</u>	<u>195</u>	<u>221</u>	<u>219</u>	<u>217</u>	<u>218</u>
Of Which: (In Piasters)						
Firewood (cu. meter)	360	560	600	550	540	520
Cigarettes (pack)	10	14	14	14	14	14
White Calico (meter)	27	33	32	34	33	33
Kerosene (liter)	7.8	10.5	10	10	10	10

- a. Data are from USAID sources. For all indexes 1 January 1965 = 100.  
 b. Price level just prior to the 18 June devaluation.

### Saigon Free Market Gold and Currency Prices



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