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PAGE 1 OF 3 PAGES

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COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

Case # NLJ 93-68

DOI 8 MAY 1966

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SUBJECT REMARK BY GENERAL TRAN VAN MINH THAT HE HAS HEARD THE BUDDHISTS WOULD ACCEPT HIM AS PRIME MINISTER AND MINH'S VIEW THAT A NEW GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE SOUTHERN LEADERSHIP

ACC VIETNAM, SAIGON [REDACTED] FIELD NO. [REDACTED]

SOURCE [REDACTED]

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1. ACCORDING TO GENERAL TRAN VAN MINH, WHO HAS BEEN UNASSIGNED SINCE JULY 1965, NGUYEN HOANG KINH OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TOLD MINH THAT MINH'S NAME APPEARS ON A LIST COMPILED BY THE BUDDHISTS OF PERSONS WHO WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE FOR THE JOB OF PRIME MINISTER. KINH FURTHER TOLD MINH THAT BUDDHIST INSTITUTE CHAIRMAN THICH TAM CHAU HAD REMARKED THAT MINH IS A MODERATE CATHOLIC ACCEPTABLE TO THE BUDDHISTS. KINH EXPLAINED THAT THE BUDDHIST LEADERSHIP HAS ALREADY ENDORSED

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IN 16623  
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PAGE 2 OF 3 PAGES

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RETIRED GENERAL TRAN VAN DON AS A FUTURE PRIME MINISTER AND THAT MINH, THEREFORE, COULD POSSIBLY BE CONSIDERED EITHER A "DARK HORSE" OR COMPROMISE CANDIDATE ACCEPTABLE TO MILITARY-POLITICAL-RELIGIOUS LEADERS.

2. GENERAL MINH STATED THAT HE TENDED TO DISCOUNT THE EVEN REMOTE POSSIBILITY OF HIS HAVING A CHANCE FOR THE POST OF PRIME MINISTER. MINH ADDED THAT HE WAS READY TO SERVE HIS COUNTRY IN ANY USEFUL MANNER. MINH CLAIMED HE WOULD NOT PERMIT HIMSELF TO BECOME INVOLVED IN ANY ACTION AIMED AT VIOLENT OVERTHROW OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

3. ON 4 MAY MINH EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT GENERAL DON WAS PERHAPS THE ONE PERSON WHO HAD ALL THE NECESSARY QUALIFICATIONS FOR MAKING HIM AN ACCEPTABLE PRIME MINISTER. MINH OBSERVED THAT KEY MILITARY PERSONALITIES WOULD ACCEPT DON BECAUSE OF HIS MILITARY BACKGROUND, A CIRCUMSTANCE WHICH WOULD INCREASE HIS LASTING POTENTIAL. FURTHERMORE, DON IS A SOUTHERNER. MINH THOUGHT FORMER PRIME MINISTER TRAN VAN HUONG WOULD BE AN IDEAL CHIEF OF STATE FOR DON. MINH CONTINUED THAT HE TRIED ALWAYS TO REMAIN APOLITICAL BUT, IF DON ASKED HIM TO PARTICIPATE IN A NEW GOVERNMENT, HE WOULD ACCEPT. MINH, WHO IS A SOUTHERNER, EMPHASIZED THAT GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP DOWN TO PROVINCE AND LOCAL LEVEL MUST BE IN THE HANDS OF SOUTHERNERS. HE COMMENTED THAT IT IS QUITE

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LOGICAL THAT THE POPULATION IS RESTIVE BECAUSE MOST GOVERNMENT POSTS AT ALL LEVELS ARE HELD BY NORTHERNERS.

4. NO DIRECT CONTACT EXISTS BETWEEN DON AND MINH, ACCORDING TO GENERAL MINH. MINH NOTED THAT TWO OF HIS AIDES REPORTED THAT EVIDENTLY DON HAD MADE CONTACTS IN MILITARY CIRCLES AND CIRCULATED MINH'S NAME AS ONE WHO WOULD BE NONCONTROVERSIAL AND A SUITABLE MILITARY CANDIDATE FOR A KEY GOVERNMENT POST. THE AIDES HAD HEARD THIS FROM A NUMBER OF JUNIOR AND FIELD GRADE OFFICERS.

5. GENERAL MINH SAID THAT ELECTIONS SHOULD BE DEFERRED INDEFINITELY. MINH REMARKED THAT HE FEARED ELECTIONS WOULD SERVE TO CONFUSE THE SITUATION MORE AND THAT THE VIET CONG WOULD SURELY EXPLOIT SUCH TO THEIR ADVANTAGE.

6. FIELD DISSEM: STATE USAID JUSPAO USMACV USARV NAVFORV 7TH AIR FORCE CINCPAC ARPAC PACAF PACFLT.

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