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1971 SEP 18 12 53

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~ 0181023Z SEP 71 VIA CAS CHANNELS  
FROM: AMBASSADOR BUNKER SAIGON 0198 IMMEDIATE  
TO: THE WHITE HOUSE, EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY HENRY A. KISSINGER  
REF: WHS 1102

NSS, State Dept reviews completed

MORI C03317877

SECTION 1 OF 5

1. IN RESPONSE TO THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST FOR MY VIEWS ON THE CURRENT SITUATION HERE, I AM SUBMITTING MY THOUGHTS ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE POLITICAL AREA AND THE STATUS OF SECURITY.
  - A. POLITICAL: THE PRESIDENTIAL "ELECTIONS" AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE.
2. FOLLOWING IS MY ASSESSMENT AND INTERPRETATION OF WHAT HAPPENED HERE IN CONNECTION WITH THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, ALONG WITH MY THOUGHTS ON THE LIKELY COURSE OF DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, AND WHAT THIS MAY MEAN TO OUR POLICIES AND EFFORTS.
3. NONE OF THE THREE CENTRAL FIGURES EMERGES WITH ANY CREDIT. THEIR ACTIONS, DECISIONS AND STATEMENTS REVEALED THAT IN TERMS OF THE NATION'S INTERESTS EACH HAD SERIOUS FLAWS IN HIS MAKEUP.
4. THIEU:
  - A. IT IS NOW EVIDENT THAT THIEU HAD FOR SOME TIME NOT INTENDED TO ALLOW A REASONABLY FAIR ELECTION TO TAKE PLACE. HE CONVINCED HIMSELF THAT HE COULD NOT WIN OR RAN SERIOUS RISKS IN A THREE-CORNERED RACE, AND ACCORDINGLY MADE HIS PLANS WELL IN ADVANCE TO CUT KY OUT OF THE RACE. WITH THAT IN MIND HE DEVELOPED THE ELECTION BILL, OVERRODE THE SENATE'S OBJECTIONS, BRIBED THE LOWER HOUSE TO PUT THE BILL THROUGH IN EARLY JUNE, AND THEN SEWED UP ENOUGH ENDORSERS TO KEEP KY OUT OF THE RACE.
  - B. TOWARD THE END OF MAY, EVEN AS HE WAS PUSHING THE BILL THROUGH THE LEGISLATURE, WRITTEN SECRET INSTRUCTIONS WENT OUT TO THE PROVINCE CHIEFS TO DO WHATEVER WAS NECESSARY TO ASSURE HIS VICTORY. THIS WAS NOT DUE SO MUCH TO A LACK OF CONFIDENCE ABOUT THE ELECTION OUTCOME AS IT WAS EVIDENCE OF HIS INTENTION TO PILE UP AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY. FOR FOUR YEARS HE HAS SMARTED UNDER THE CHARGE THAT WITH 35 PERCENT OF THE VOTE HE WAS A MINORITY PRESIDENT. THIS HE WAS DETERMINED TO RECTIFY AT WHATEVER COST.
  - C. HIS BASIC MISCALCULATION WAS HIS CONVICTION THAT MINH WOULD RUN, EVEN THOUGH I WARNED HIM REPEATEDLY AND HAD MY STAFF WARN HIS CLOSEST ADVISERS THAT MINH WAS A MOST RELUCTANT AND TIMOROUS CANDIDATE WHO WOULD WITHDRAW IF HE THOUGHT HE COULD NOT WIN, USING THE EXCUSE THE ELECTION WOULD BE RIGGED. THIEU'S SECOND MISTAKE WAS TO ASSUME THAT THE WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS TO THE PROVINCE CHIEFS WOULD NOT BE LEAKED TO MINH.
  - D. IN SHORT, THIEU OVERREACHED HIMSELF. WE, IN THE MISSION, AND MOST LOCAL OBSERVERS, WERE CONVINCED THAT HE COULD HAVE WON HANDILY IN EITHER A THREE-MAN OR TWO-MAN RACE, AND I TOLD HIM SO EARLY THIS YEAR AND SEVERAL TIMES SUBSEQUENTLY. BUT THIEU WAS APPARENTLY INCAPABLE OF APPROACHING THE ELECTION OBJECTIVELY.
5. MIN

A. FROM THE VERY OUTSET MINH WAS A HESITANT CANDIDATE, WHO WAS PUSHED INTO RUNNING AND KEPT IN THE RACE BY A HANDFUL OF SUPPORTERS WITH POLITICAL AMBITIONS. HE NEVER SHOWED ANY REAL DRIVE FOR POWER, NEVER BUILT ANY EFFECTIVE COUNTRY-WIDE ORGANIZATION TO CONTEST THE ELECTION, AND TIME AND AGAIN PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY SAID HE WOULD RUN ONLY IF THE ELECTION WAS FAIR AND HONEST. HE GAVE THE APPEARANCE OF A MAN LOOKING FOR ANY EXCUSE TO WITHDRAW, AND FINALLY FOUND THAT EXCUSE IN THREE DEVELOPMENTS WHICH CONVINCED HIM HE WOULD BE DECISIVELY BEATEN: THE SECRET WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS TO PROVINCE CHIEFS TO ASSURE THIEU'S VICTORY; AN QUANG'S RESERVED POSITION ON OPEN AND ALL-OUT ENDORSEMENT OF HIM; AND KY'S INITIAL DISQUALIFICATION, WHICH ASSURED THIEU THAT THE MILITARY VOTE WOULD NOT DIVIDE AND WOULD GO OVERWHELMINGLY IN HIS FAVOR.

B. WHILE MINH MAY HAVE HONESTLY BELIEVED THAT THE GREAT MAJORITY OF PEOPLE FAVORED HIM AND THAT IN A FREE ELECTION HE WOULD WIN EASILY, THIS WAS SHEER FANTASY. WHAT WAS CLEAR WAS THAT HE WOULD GET A VERY LARGE VOTE (PERHAPS IN THE AREA OF 35 PERCENT TO 40 PERCENT) BASED ON GENERAL WAR-WEARINESS AND THE HOPE THAT HE MIGHT BE THE MAN WHO COULD BRING PEACE, VC SUPPORT, THE BACKING OF AN ASSORTMENT OF POLITICAL ELEMENTS OPPOSED TO THIEU, INCLUDING AN QUANG, AND THE FACT THAT HE WAS A SOUTHERNER. HAD HE BEEN AN AGGRESSIVE LEADER, HE COULD HAVE EXPLOITED CORRUPTION, THE PEOPLE'S DESIRE FOR PEACE, THE HARDSHIPS OF THE LARGE BODY OF WAR VICTIMS AND REFUGEES, AND THE PROMISE OF PRODUCING POLITICAL UNITY; AND HE COULD HAVE MADE AN ISSUE OF THE SECRET INSTRUCTIONS TO THE PROVINCE CHIEFS AND FOUGHT THIS ISSUE OUT IN THE COURTS AND BEFORE THE ELECTION COUNCIL. ALL OF THIS WOULD HAVE ADDED TO THE BASIC VOTE HE WAS ASSURED OF.

C. IN HIS FINAL CONVERSATIONS WITH ME, HE MADE IT EVIDENT THAT HE WOULD NOT RUN UNLESS HE WAS CERTAIN OF WINNING. I POINTED OUT THAT HE WOULD GET A VERY LARGE VOTE AND THAT HE HAD A CHANCE TO WIN IF HE CONTESTED THE ELECTION VIGOROUSLY. IF HE DID NOT WIN, THE VOTE FOR HIM WOULD BE SO LARGE AND IMPRESSIVE AS TO MAKE HIM THE LEADER OF A FORMIDABLE OPPOSITION AND A POWERFUL CRITIC OF THE GOVERNMENT, IN WHICH CAPACITY HE COULD PERFORM A GREAT AND CONSTRUCTIVE SERVICE TO THE COUNTRY. HIS REPLY TO THIS WAS THAT HE WAS NOT INTERESTED IN BEING A MINORITY LEADER OR PERFORMING THAT FUNCTION. HE CHOSE INSTEAD TO WITHDRAW--AN ACT OF POLITICAL IRRESPONSIBILITY IN A MAN WHO LIKES TO PICTURE HIMSELF AS THE SOUL OF PATRIOTISM WHO WILL DO ANYTHING FOR HIS COUNTRY.

**TOP SECRET SENSITIVE EXCLUSIVE EYES ONLY**

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1971 SEP 18 16 34

**TOP SECRET SENSITIVE**

**EXCLUSIVE EYES ONLY**

**T O P S E C R E T SENSITIVE 181023Z SEP 71 VIA CAS CHANNELS**  
**FROM: AMBASSADOR BUNKER SAIGON 0198 IMMEDIATE**  
**TO: THE WHITE HOUSE EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER**  
**REF: WHS 1102**

**SECTION 2 OF 5**

**D. IN ANY FUTURE DEALING WITH THE SITUATION HERE, WE MUST KEEP IN MIND THAT MINH IS NO POLITICAL ANIMAL, HE HAS NEITHER GUTS NOR ADMINISTRATIVE ABILITY, AND HE HAS NO CAPACITY FOR POLITICAL OR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP. IF HE EVER CAME TO POWER HE WOULD BE A DISASTER FOR THE SECOND TIME. THIS WE SUSPECTED, AND HIS RECENT BEHAVIOR HAS MADE THIS UNMISTAKABLY CLEAR NOT ONLY TO US BUT TO MANY VIETNAMESE, INCLUDING AN QUANG WHICH WAS HIS MAIN HOPE OF SUPPORT.**

**6. KY:**

**A. KY PLAYED A VERY DIFFERENT GAME FROM THIEU OR MINH. AS A NORTHERNER, KY KNEW HE HAD NO CHANCE OF WINNING. HIS AIM FROM THE START WAS MISCHIEF-MAKING, I.E., TO EMBARRASS, DISCREDIT AND DESTROY THIEU. IF THIS LED TO A MINH VICTORY, THEN KY FORESAW THAT IT COULD NOT LAST AND THAT THE THREAT OF A MILITARY TAKEOVER WOULD OPEN NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIM. KY THEREFORE WANTED MINH TO STAY IN THE RACE, AND SAW HIS OWN ROLE AS ONE OF TAKING VOTES AWAY FROM THIEU SO AS TO ENHANCE MINH'S CHANCES OF WINNING. IF MINH LOST, THEN THIEU WOULD HAVE TO FACE GOVERNING AGAIN UNDER THE CLOUD OF ANOTHER MINORITY MANDATE.**

**B. IN HIS PRE-CAMPAIGN MANEUVERING KY COULD HAVE DONE MUCH MORE IN PRESSING HIS NOMINATION. HE WAS SLOW IN ORGANIZING HIS EFFORT, SLOW IN SEEKING NOMINATORS, AND SLOW IN MAKING COMPLAINTS TO THE PRIME MINISTER, THE COURTS AND THE PRESS AFTER IT BECAME EVIDENT THAT THIEU WAS PREEMPTING THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL ENDORSERS AND OBSTRUCTING KY'S EFFORTS TO GET THE PROVINCE CHIEFS TO CERTIFY HIS ENDORSEMENTS. HAD KY FOUGHT HARDER AND EARLIER, THERE WAS A GOOD CHANCE HE COULD HAVE GOT HIMSELF QUALIFIED, AND THIS MIGHT HAVE PERSUADED MINH TO RUN. BUT WHEN KY WAS INITIALLY DISQUALIFIED IT GAVE MINH THE FINAL IMPETUS TO WITHDRAW.**

C. WHEN MINH WITHDREW AND THE SUPREME COURT REVERSED ITSELF ON THIEU'S INSTRUCTIONS TO FIND A WAY TO QUALIFY KY, KY THEN SAW THAT HIS BEST WAY TO DISCREDIT THIEU WAS TO WITHDRAW HIMSELF SO AS TO MAKE THE ELECTION A FARSE. KY IS HOPING THE U. S. CONGRESS WILL REFUSE AID TO VIET-NAM UNLESS THERE IS A CONTESTED ELECTION AND THAT THIS WOULD FORCE THIEU OUT OF OFFICE AND OUT OF THE RUNNING. HE SENT KHOI TO THE U. S. TO STIR THIS POT. IN A NEW ELECTION KY NO DOUBT THINKS THAT IN VIEW OF MINH'S WEAKNESS AS A LEADER HE WOULD HAVE EVERY PROSPECT OF WINNING, SINCE HE ASSUMES HE WOULD BE THE PREFERRED CHOICE OF THE MILITARY, AS WELL AS THE U. S.

7. IN ALL THIS, ALL THREE HAVE BEHAVED IRRESPONSIBLY, BUT I WOULD HOLD THIEU MOST TO ACCOUNT. HE SHOWED HIMSELF TO BE POLITICALLY NAIVE BY MANEUVERS WHICH IN THE END PUT HIM ON THE DEFENSIVE AND AT THE MERCY OF KY AND MINH. PERMITTING WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS TO GO OUT TO HIS PROVINCE CHIEFS WAS AN ACT OF STUPIDITY. HE HAD EVERY CHANCE OF WINNING EITHER A TWO-WAY OR A THREE-WAY RACE IN A FAIR ELECTION, ESPECIALLY IF HE HAD CULTIVATED DR. BONG'S NATIONAL PROGRESSIVE PARTY AND BUU'S FARMER-LABOR PARTY. HE CHOSE INSTEAD TO IGNORE THEM, AND BY PUTTING UP HIS OWN CANDIDATES AGAINST THEIRS IN THE LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS HE FURTHER ALIENATED HIS NATURAL ALLIES, WHO WANTED AND WERE READY TO SUPPORT HIM AS THE BEST BY FAR OF THE THREE CANDIDATES. WHAT HE SOUGHT TO DO IN THE LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS WAS TO KEEP THE ORGANIZED POLITICAL FORCES DIVIDED AND KEEP POLITICS PERSONALIZED RATHER THAN INSTITUTIONALIZED.

8. THIEU'S STOCK WHICH WAS VERY HIGH FOUR MONTHS AGO HAS FALLEN. BY CREATING PROBLEMS WHERE FEW EXISTED, HE HAS PRECIPITATED DOMESTIC TURMOIL AND HAS CREATED DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN HIMSELF AND MANY OF THOSE AROUND HIM, INCLUDING HIS NATURAL ALLIES AMONG THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL LEADERS. SINCE HE ARRIVED AT THIS JUNCTURE WITH VIRTUALLY NO CONSULTATION IN ADVANCE WITH ANYONE OUTSIDE HIS IMMEDIATE CIRCLE, THOSE WHO SUPPORT HIM FEEL ANNOYED, SADDENED OR BITTER FOR HIS HAVING LANDED THEM AND THE COUNTRY IN THE SITUATION IT IS IN, WITH ALL THE INTERNAL UNCERTAINTIES OF THE FUTURE PLUS THE PROSPECT OF EVEN MORE SERIOUS TROUBLE WITH AMERICAN CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC OPINION AND THE DANGER OF AN AID CUT-OFF.

**TOP SECRET SENSITIVE EXCLUSIVE EYES ONLY**

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1971 SEP 18 17 06

**TOP SECRET SENSITIVE 181023Z SEP 71 VIA CAS CHANNELS**  
**FROM: AMBASSADOR BUNKER SAIGON 0198 IMMEDIATE**  
**TO: THE WHITE HOUSE EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER**  
**REF: WHS 1102**

**SECTION 3 OF 5**

9. WHEN THE CRISIS FINALLY CAME WITH KY'S WITHDRAWAL, MANY VIETNAMESE FELT THE MOST FEASIBLE CONSTITUTIONAL COURSE WOULD HAVE BEEN FOR THIEU AND KY TO HAVE RESIGNED, ALLOWING THE SPEAKER OF THE SENATE HUYEN TO TAKE OVER AND ARRANGE NEW ELECTIONS, KEEPING THE CABINET MORE OR LESS INTACT. WITH THIEU, KY AND GENERAL VIEN ACTING IN THE CAPACITY OF MILITARY ADVISERS TO HUYEN. HAD KY NOT MADE THIS PROPOSAL INITIALLY, I THINK THIEU MIGHT HAVE COME TO THIS VIEW OR BEEN PUSHED INTO IT BY THOSE AROUND HIM. BUT ONCE KY HAD PUT FORWARD THE PROPOSITION, THIEU WOULD HAVE NO PART OF IT. THIS SOLUTION, OR SOMETHING APPROXIMATE TO IT, STILL REMAINS A POSSIBLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT, IF THIEU FINDS HE CANNOT GOVERN AFTER OCTOBER 3.

10. BETWEEN NOW AND OCTOBER 3, THE DEGREE OF TURMOIL IN THE STREETS WILL DEPEND LARGELY ON AN QUANG'S TACTICS. THE ACTIVIST ELEMENTS AMONG STUDENTS, WAR INVALIDS, WAR WIDOWS, AND SUNDRY MINOR POLITICAL GROUPINGS ARE TOO WEAK BY THEMSELVES TO CREATE ANY SERIOUS TROUBLE. IF KY DECIDES TO STIMULATE THEM WITH A VIEW TO FORCING THIEU TO ABANDON THE REFERENDUM IN FAVOR OF A NEW ELECTION, WHICH IS THE DIRECTION IN WHICH HE IS GOING, TROUBLE IN THE STREETS WOULD INCREASE BUT WOULD NOT BE UNMANAGEABLE.

11. ONLY IF AN QUANG DECIDES TO TAKE TO THE STREETS WOULD THERE BE REALLY SERIOUS TROUBLE. PRESENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE OFFICIAL LEADERSHIP OF AN QUANG WILL NOT ADOPT THAT POLICY, PARTLY BECAUSE THEY DID QUITE WELL IN THE LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS AND ARE NOW COMMITTED TO A COURSE OF LEGAL ACTION, BUT MAINLY OUT OF FEAR THAT STREET VIOLENCE COULD GET OUT OF CONTROL AND ONLY PLAY INTO COMMUNIST HANDS OR FURTHER KY'S PLANS. EXTREMISTS IN AN QUANG WILL SEEK TO ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT STREET PROTESTS BUT, WITHOUT OFFICIAL AN QUANG APPROVAL LARGE SCALE AND PERSISTENT RESORT TO VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS IS UNLIKELY.

12. A NUMBER OF MINOR POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND PARTIES, INCLUDING SOME CATHOLICS, ARE SPEAKING OF ORGANIZING A BOYCOTT, AND AN QUANG'S PRONOUNCEMENT OF SEPTEMBER 16 THAT THEY WILL NEITHER TAKE PART IN THE ELECTION NOR RECOGNIZE ITS RESULTS IS TANTAMOUNT TO A BOYCOTT. BUT CONCERTED ACTION BY DIVERSE GROUPS HAS NEVER BEEN A VIETNAMESE FORTE AND THESE EFFORTS WILL HAVE VERY LIMITED EFFECT IN THE RURAL AREAS ALTHOUGH THEY WILL MEET WITH SOME SUCCESS IN THE LARGER CITIES. THESE EXPRESSIONS OF DISSATISFACTION POINT TO THE PROSPECT OF A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF INSTABILITY AFTER OCTOBER

13. WE RULE OUT ANY REAL DANGER OF A COUP, FOR APART FROM WIDE-SPREAD LOCAL OPPOSITION IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT AMER. IN SUPPORT COULD HARDLY SURVIVE ANOTHER COUP. AN ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF THIEU IS A MORE LIKELY PROSPECT.

14. AS THE THIEU ADMINISTRATION GEARS UP FOR THE REFERENDUM, THE STRESS IS ON TECHNICAL ARRANGEMENTS, ON GETTING OUT THE VOTE AND ABOVE ALL ON SECURING A LARGE MAJORITY IN FAVOR OF THIEU. THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE OPPOSITION TO ENTER INTO A DEBATE, NO OFFER OF EQUAL FACILITIES ON TV AND THE RADIO, AND NO EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN ON HOW TO EXPRESS NO-CONFIDENCE IN THE POLLING BOOTH. I HAVE REPEATEDLY URGED THIS ON THIEU IF THE REFERENDUM IS TO BE MADE BELIEVABLE, AND TODAY I HAD A REPORT THAT HE MAY DO SOMETHING ALONG THESE LINES.

15. THE PROSPECT IS THUS FOR AN UNCONVINCING EXERCISE, BUT IT WILL NOT SERIOUSLY IMPAIR THIEU'S ABILITY TO GOVERN IN THE SHORT RUN FOR HE STILL COMMANDS VERY CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT IN THE COUNTRY.

16. THIEU WILL WIN THE ELECTION IN TERMS OF VOTES CAST BY A LARGE MAJORITY, WITH A HIGH TURNOUT IN THE RURAL AREAS, ORGANIZED AND ENCOURAGED BY THE LOCAL OFFICIALS, BUT WITH A SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED TURNOUT IN THE LARGER CITIES. THE SCENE OF ACTION WILL THEN SHIFT TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHICH MEETS IN OCTOBER TO START ORGANIZING ITSELF.

17. GIVEN A MANDATE OF LIMITED CREDIBILITY, THIEU CAN EXPECT TO FACE CONTINUOUS CRITICISM FROM THE ENLARGED OPPOSITION IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND FROM POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS. THE FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS OF THE LOWER HOUSE WILL BE TO VALIDATE THE LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS. SINCE THE COURTS HAVE ALREADY FOUND SERIOUS IRREGULARITIES IN TWO CASES AND OTHERS HAVE YET TO BE DECIDED THERE WILL LIKELY BE CONSIDERABLE AGITATION NOT TO SEAT THE WINNERS IN SEVERAL OF THE PROVINCES. WE EXPECT THIS WILL BE FOLLOWED BY EFFORTS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND OUTSIDE TO FORCE A NEW PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, BUT AT THIS TIME IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT THE OPPOSITION TO THIEU WILL BE SUFFICIENTLY STRONG OR UNIFIED TO ACHIEVE THIS. SHOULD CONGRESS CUT OFF AID, THIEU HAS SAID HE WOULD RESIGN AND NOT BE A CANDIDATE AGAIN. ON THE LATTER POINT HE MIGHT HAVE SECOND THOUGHTS.

**TOP SECRET SENSITIVE EXCLUSIVE EYES ONLY**

**TOP SECRET SENSITIVE**

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1971 SEP 18

71 SEP 18 PM 1:40

SITUATION

**T O P S E C R E T SENSITIVE 181023Z SEP 71 VIA CAS CHANNELS**  
**FROM: AMBASSADOR BUNKER SAIGON 0198 IMMEDIATE**  
**TO: THE WHITE HOUSE EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER**  
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**SECTION 4 OF 5**

18. AS WE ASSESS THIEU IN RETROSPECT OF THE PAST FOUR YEARS AND IN THE LIGHT OF THE MOST RECENT EVENTS WE HAVE TO CONCLUDE THAT, WHATEVER HIS VIRTUES IN OTHER FIELDS, AND HE DOES HAVE MANY VIRTUES, IN POLITICAL MATTERS HIS PERFORMANCE HAS FALLEN SHORT OF THE COUNTRY'S NEEDS. IN POLITICS HE IS A MAN WHO DOES NOT REALLY CONSULT WITH OTHERS, HE DOES NOT REVEAL HIS HAND, HE DOES NOT SEEK TO ENLIST OTHER LEADERS AS GENUINE ADVISERS, AND HE DOES NOT EVEN CULTIVATE HIS NATURAL ALLIES. IF HE PERSISTS IN THIS COURSE HE WILL HAVE A STORMY SECOND TERM, AND HE WILL HAVE TO RESORT MORE AND MORE TO SUPPRESSION OF HIS CRITICS AND THE PRESS IN ORDER TO GOVERN. A FAILURE BY HIM TO START BUILDING A GENUINE POLITICAL GROUPING OF FORCES AND A WIDER BASE OF SUPPORT SOON AFTER OCTOBER 3 MAY WELL PROVE DECISIVE FOR CONTINUED STABILITY HERE. SHOULD THIEU GO ON GOVERNING ON A PERSONAL BASIS AS HE HAS IN THE PAST THEN I FORESEE SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES AHEAD.

19. DESPITE THESE SERIOUS SHORTCOMINGS IN THIEU'S HANDLING OF HIS POLITICAL PROBLEMS, HE HAS TO HIS CREDIT SUBSTANTIAL ACHIEVEMENTS IN OTHER AREAS. HE HAS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED THE COMMAND STRUCTURE OF THE MILITARY FORCES AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS (TO WHICH OUR OWN EFFORTS HAVE MADE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION); HE HAS SHOWN IMAGINATION AND DRIVE IN PRESSING THE PACIFICATION PROGRAM; HE HAS RECOGNIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING THE TERRITORIAL AND LOCAL SELF-DEFENSE FORCES; HE HAS BEGUN THE BUILDING OF DEMOCRACY AT THE GRASS ROOTS LEVEL; HE HAS INSTITUTED THE REVOLUTIONARY LAND-TO-THE-TILLER PROGRAM; AND HE HAS SUPPORTED ECONOMIC REFORM MEASURES WHICH HAVE EFFECTIVELY RESTRAINED INFLATIONARY PRESSURES. CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT THE COUNTRY IS AT WAR, A LARGE LATITUDE FOR CRITICISM IS PERMITTED TO THE OPPOSITION. IT CAN BE FAIRLY SAID THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT HAS GROWN IN EFFECTIVENESS OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS AND IS TODAY FUNCTIONING BETTER THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE PAST. THERE IS A GROWING COMMITMENT TO CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES AND TO THE PEACEFUL TRANSFER OF POWER. ON THE BASIS OF PERFORMANCE, I THINK IT IS FAIR TO SAY THAT THIEU STANDS OUT IN COMPARISON WITH THE OTHER CANDIDATES AND COMPARED TO ANY OTHER INDIVIDUAL PRESENTLY ON THE HORIZON.

20. IF THIEU SHOULD FOR ONE REASON OR OTHER FIND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO GOVERN, I AM FAIRLY CONFIDENT THAT THE VIETNAMESE WILL TRY TO FIND A SOLUTION BY CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL MEANS. THIS IS WHAT MOST PEOPLE WILL WANT FOR MEMORIES OF THE 1963 OVERTHROW OF DIEN AND THE ANARCHY THAT FOLLOWED ARE VIVID AND ALMOST NO ONE WANTS TO REPEAT IT. IN NEW ELECTIONS, IF THIEU DOES NOT RUN, KHIEM WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY MAKE A BID FOR THE SUCCESSION. HE IS A

ON THE SUPPORT OF MOST THE MILITARY. HE HAS SHOWN HIMSELF TO BE A GOOD ADMINISTRATOR. HE HAS POLITICAL SENSE. HE IS FAR MORE INTELLIGENT THAN PEOPLE GIVE HIM CREDIT FOR. IN TWO AND HALF YEARS OF WORKING WITH HIM, WE HAVE FOUND THAT HE HAS A GOOD INSTINCT FOR DOING THE RIGHT THING. KHIEM BROKE WITH GENERAL KHANH IN 1964 WHEN KHANH REFUSED TO CARRY OUT THE AGREEMENT TO MOVE TOWARD A CONSTITUTIONAL AND ELECTED GOVERNMENT. KHIEM OPPOSED THIEU'S HANDLING OF THE CHAU CASE, BUT WAS UNABLE TO INFLUENCE THIEU IN THAT UNFORTUNATE ENTERPRISE. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT KHIEM HAD ANY PART IN THIEU'S PLANNING FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. WHILE KHIEM MAY BE ACCUSED OF NOT STANDING UP TO THIEU MORE STRONGLY ON BASIC ISSUES, AND WHILE HE HAS A REPUTATION FOR TOLERATING CORRUPTION, HE SEEMS AT THIS TIME TO REPRESENT A BETTER CHOICE FOR THE SUCCESSION, IF IT SHOULD COME TO THAT, THAN EITHER KY OR MINH.

B. THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND VIET CONG.

21. THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND VIET CONG WILL SEEK WHATEVER ADVANTAGE THEY CAN FROM THIS COMPLEX SITUATION. THEY ARE LED BY THEIR OWN DOGMA TO SEE GREATER LIKELIHOOD THAN WE DO OF A COUP OR OF LARGE ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH THE GVN WILL BE UNABLE TO CONTROL. THEIR SPECIFIC TACTICS WITH REGARD TO THE OCTOBER 3 ELECTION WILL BE A MIX OF ENCOURAGING DEMONSTRATIONS, URGING PEOPLE TO BOYCOTT THE ELECTION OR DEFACE THEIR BALLOTS, AND ATTEMPTING, WHERE THEY HAVE THE CAPABILITY, TO DISRUPT THE ELECTION ITSELF THROUGH MILITARY AND TERRORIST ACTION. IN ADDITION, BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER THE ELECTION, THEY WILL TRY (A) TO ACCELERATE THE INFILTRATION OF LEGAL CADRE INTO URBAN AREAS AND (B) TO MOVE MILITARY AND GUERRILLA UNITS NEARER TO SAIGON TO TRY TO EXPLOIT THE SITUATION SHOULD A MAJOR OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO SUDDENLY DEVELOP.

22. THE CAPABILITY OF HANOI AND THE VIET CONG TO DO THESE THINGS NOW OR IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS IS ACTUALLY QUITE LIMITED. THEY DO NOT NOW HAVE IN PLACE NEAR THE CAPITAL, AND IN OUR OPINION WILL BE UNABLE TO BRING INTO THE SAIGON AREA, ENOUGH MILITARY FORCES (IN COMPARISON WITH THOSE AVAILABLE TO ARVN) TO CAPITALIZE ON A COUP ATTEMPT OR ON ANY LARGE ANTI-GVN DEMONSTRATIONS. AT MOST, THE ENEMY COULD PROBABLY GET OFF SOME HARASSING ATTACKS NEAR SAIGON WHICH MIGHT BE TROUBLESOME FOR THE ARVN IN A CONFUSED PERIOD, BUT IN NO SENSE A DECISIVE INFLUENCE ON THE SITUATION. SOME INFILTRATION OF ENEMY TROOPS FROM CAMBODIA BACK INTO GVN MR-3 HAS OCCURRED IN RECENT MONTHS, BUT NOT IN AMOUNTS SUFFICIENT TO AFFECT THIS JUDGMENT. THE PICTURE WOULD CHANGE ONLY IF LARGE-SCALE NEW INFILTRATION OF TROOPS FROM NORTH VIETNAM GOT UNDERWAY WHEN THE DRY SEASON BEGINS IN OCTOBER IN THE LAO PANHANDLE AND THE LOWER HALF OF SOUTH VIET-NAM. IF THIS OCCURRED, THE TIME OF MAJOR THREAT WOULD NOT COME UNTIL EARLY 1972. ELSEWHERE IN SOUTH VIET-NAM, THERE IS NO AREA, EXCEPT POSSIBLY NORTHERN MR-1 (WHICH IS NOW ENTERING THE MONSOON SEASON), WHERE THE ENEMY COULD LAUNCH A MAJOR BIG-UNIT OFFENSIVE IN THE NEXT TWO OR THREE MONTHS.

23. SIMILARLY, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND VIET CONG PROBABLY DO NOT POSSESS AND CANNOT MOVE ENOUGH LEGAL CADRE INTO URBAN AREAS TO FORMENT OR INFLUENCE THE COURSE OF ANTI-THIEU DEMONSTRATIONS SIGNIFICANTLY. THE GVN'S INTERNAL SECURITY AND POLICE FORCES HAVE DEALT FAIRLY EFFECTIVELY WITH THE SUBVERSIVE AND LEGAL CADRE THREAT OVER THE PAST YEAR AND SHOULD CONTINUE TO DO SO OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. THE VIET CONG MAY BE ABLE TO INFLUENCE THE SITUATION MARGINALLY BY INSTIGATING OR ENCOURAGING DEMONSTRATIONS IN SOME AREAS, BUT HERE AGAIN THEIR ROLE WILL NOT BE DECISIVE.

EXCLUSIVE



**TOP SECRET SENSITIVE**

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17 SEP 18 PM 1:22

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SITUATION

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**FINAL SECTION OF 5**

**C. SECURITY.**

**24. ENEMY INTENTIONS. ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT DURING THE REMAINDER OF 1971, THE ENEMY WILL HAVE ONLY A LIMITED CAPABILITY TO CARRY OUT MAIN FORCE OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS. THE EFFECT OF THE OPERATIONS IN LAOS (LAM SON 719) AND IN CAMBODIA EARLIER THIS YEAR HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY APPARENT. TOGETHER WITH GREATLY IMPROVED METHODS OF INTERDICTION, THESE OPERATIONS HAVE SERIOUSLY DISRUPTED THE ENEMY'S LOGISTIC RESOURCES AND INFILTRATION ROUTES. THE COMMITMENT OF SIZEABLE FORCES IN LAOS, CAMBODIA, AND SOUTHERN NORTH VIET-NAM ARE ALSO LIMITING FACTORS IN HIS ABILITY TO UNDERTAKE ANY LARGE SCALE OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS.**

**25. THE COMMUNISTS' LIMITED CAPABILITY, THEREFORE, WILL BE DIRECTED PRIMARILY TOWARD SMALL UNIT OPERATIONS, GUERRILLA TACTICS, AND TERRORISM. EFFORTS AT DISRUPTION OF THE LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS WERE INEFFECTIVE AND IT IS PROBABLE THAT SIMILAR EFFORTS DIRECTED AGAINST THE PRESIDENTIAL VOTING WILL BE EQUALLY SO. HE MAY, HOWEVER, ATTEMPT HIGH POINTS IN SELECTED AREAS DURING THE TIME FRAME OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND DURING THE REMAINDER OF 1971.**

**26. DURING THE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 1971 TO THE END OF THE YEAR, THE ENEMY WILL PROBABLY PLACE PRIMARY EMPHASIS ON HIS DRY SEASON LOGISTICAL MOVEMENT WHICH WILL BE INITIATED IN MID-OCTOBER CONCENTRATING HIS EFFORTS ON BUILDING UP HIS DEPLETED STOCKPILES IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA IN PREPARATION FOR STEPPED UP OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS IN THE WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN OF 1972.**

27. RVNAF IMPROVEMENT AND MODERNIZATION PROGRAM. THE VIETNAMIZATION PROGRAM IS ON SCHEDULE AND CONTINUES TO PROGRESS REASONABLY WELL. RVNAF'S SHOWN STEADY IMPROVEMENT IN ITS CAPABILITY TO PLAN, COORDINATE, AND EXECUTE LARGE REALIGNMENT OF FORCES AND TO CONDUCT MULTI-BATTALION OPERATIONS. THERE ARE DEFICIENCIES, AMONG THE MOST SERIOUS BEING THE FACT THAT MANEUVER BATTALIONS ARE MUCH BELOW STRENGTH. THERE ARE STILL ALSO DEFICIENCIES IN LEADERSHIP. THESE WEAKNESSES ARE COMPENSATED BY SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN OTHER DIRECTIONS - IN BATTALION DAYS ON LARGE SCALE OPERATIONS; IMPROVEMENTS IN FIRE SUPPORT COORDINATION; WEAPONS CAPTURED/LOST RATIO; AND ENEMY/FRIENDLY KIA RATIO. OVERALL, THE PERFORMANCE OF ARVN REGULAR FORCES CONTINUES TO IMPROVE.
28. THE VIETNAMESE NAVY HAS ASSUMED FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL NEAR COAST AND COASTAL WATERWAY OPERATIONS.
29. THE VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE IS STEADILY TAKING OVER MORE OF THE AIR SUPPORT ROLE. THE VNAF CAPABILITY WHICH NOW INCLUDES ELEVEN FIGHTER/GUNSHIP SQUADRONS WILL BE INCREASED DURING CALENDAR 1972 BY THE ADDITION OF TWO MORE SQUADRONS. IT HAS ACTIVATED TEN UH SQUADRONS AND HAS FOUR MORE FOR ACTIVATION IN OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 1971. VNAF IS NOT EQUIPPED NOR TRAINED FOR CONDUCT OF AIR INTERDICTION OPERATIONS IN THE HIGH THREAT AREAS OF LAOS; THE VNAF PROGRAM HAS BEEN BASED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT U. S. AIR INTERDICTION IN LAOS WILL CONTINUE INDEFINITELY.
30. VNAF IS PERFORMING EFFECTIVELY WITHIN ITS CAPABILITIES, BUT CAN BE CHARACTERIZED AS A FLEDGLING AIR ARM WITH LIMITED NIGHT SUPPORT CAPABILITY AND NO HEAVY BOMBERS. U. S. AIR SUPPORT, THEREFORE, WILL BE REQUIRED FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD.
31. I HOPE THE ABOVE WILL BE RESPONSE TO YOUR NEEDS. GENERAL ABRAMS IS SENDING TO ADMIRAL MOORER AN ASSESSMENT OF SECURITY SITUATIONS IN RVN RUAL AREAS.
32. WARM REGARDS.

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