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PRIORITY  
IN 12467

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[REDACTED]

GROUP 1  
Excluded from automatic  
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THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE.

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CITE [REDACTED]

DIST 16 MAY 1968

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COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

DOI 15-16 MAY 1968

SUBJECT PRESIDENT THIEU'S MEETING WITH VICE PRESIDENT  
KY AND THE SENIOR GENERALS TO DISCUSS CABINET  
REORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES

ACQ VIETNAM, SAIGON (16 MAY 1968) FIELD NO.

[REDACTED]

SOURCE [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SUMMARY: [REDACTED] VICE PRES-

IDENT KY AND THE SENIOR GENERALS MET AT THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF COMPOUND

ON 15 MAY TO DISCUSS KY'S SELF DEFENSE ORGANIZATION. AT A LATTER MEET-

S-E [REDACTED] E-T [REDACTED]

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(Location)

(Access Controls)

ING THE SAME DAY WITH PRESIDENT THIEU, THIEU REFUSED TO DISCUSS WITH KY AND THE GENERALS HIS CABINET REORGANIZATION PLANS, BUT SAID HE WOULD REVEAL THEM BY 15 MAY. (KY CLAIMED LATER THAT THIEU HAD ALSO REFUSED TO DISCUSS HIS SPECIFIC PLANS WITH HIM IN PRIVATE.) THIEU ALSO TURNED ASIDE THE GENERALS' PLEAS FOR A MORE AUTHORITARIAN STYLE OF GOVERNING AND FOR A CANCELLATION OF THIEU'S REFORMS IN PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

[REDACTED] THE MILITARY WILL RELUCTANTLY ACCEPT THIEU'S DECISIONS AND WILL NOT OPPOSE TRAN VAN HUONG'S APPOINTMENT AS PRIME MINISTER BUT WOULD RESIGN ALONG WITH KY IF KEY MILITARY OR POLICE OFFICIALS WERE REMOVED. END SUMMARY.

1. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] VICE

PRESIDENT NGUYEN CAO KY AND THE SENIOR GENERALS MET WITH PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU ON 15 MAY TO DISCUSS THEIR DISSATISFACTION WITH THE PERFORMANCE AND POLICIES OF THE THIEU GOVERNMENT.

[REDACTED] EARLIER THAT DAY THE

GENERALS HAD MET WITH KY AT THE JOINT GENERAL

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STAFF COMPOUND. IN ADDITION TO KY AND KHANG  
 OTHERS ATTENDING WERE I CORPS COMMANDER LIEUTENANT  
 GENERAL HOANG XUAN LAM, II CORPS COMMANDER MAJOR  
 GENERAL LU MONG LAN, IV CORPS COMMANDER MAJOR  
 GENERAL NGUYEN DUC THANG, CHIEF OF THE JOINT  
 GENERAL STAFF GENERAL CAO VAN VIEN, MINISTER  
 OF DEFENSE LIEUTENANT GENERAL NGUYEN VAN VY,  
 MINISTER OF INTERIOR LIEUTENANT GENERAL LINK  
 QUANG VIEN, AND MINISTER OF REVOLUTIONARY  
 DEVELOPMENT LIEUTENANT GENERAL NGUYEN BAO TRI.

2. IN THE MAIN THE GENERALS' THESIS AS  
 PRESENTED TO THIEU WAS THAT DURING THESE  
 CRITICAL DAYS, WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
 UNITED STATES AND NORTH VIETNAM MEETING IN  
 PARIS, AND WITH THE ENEMY APPLYING MAXIMUM  
 PRESSURE IN THE HOPE OF ATTAINING DECISIVE  
 MILITARY AND POLITICAL VICTORIES AND  
 OF INFLUENCING PEACE TALKS, THE GOVERNMENT  
 MUST BE STRONG, DECISIVE AND TIGHTLY ORGANIZED.  
 THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE MUST BE GRANTED FULL POWERS

S-E [REDACTED] -E-T

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BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY UNTIL THE CRISIS SUBSIDES.  
THE GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY MUST FUNCTION AS ONE.  
NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO EXPERIMENT WITH CONCEPTS OF  
CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATION WHICH MAY BE SUITABLE IN  
TIME OF PEACE BUT ARE INADEQUATE IN A WARTIME  
SITUATION.

3. THE CORPS COMMANDERS SPECIFICALLY  
ASKED THIEU TO CANCEL HIS PROJECTED OVERHAUL OF THE  
PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM UNTIL AFTER THE WAR.  
THEY COMPLAINED THAT THE CHANGES WHICH ALREADY  
HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED HAVE SO FRAGMENTED THE RESPON-  
SIBILITY FOR DECISION MAKING AND WEAKENED COORDINATION  
BETWEEN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES IN THE  
PROVINCES, THAT IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THE CORPS  
COMMANDERS TO DO THEIR JOBS.

4. IN RESPONSE THIEU SAID THAT HE TOO WAS  
DISTURBED BY THE DELIBERATE PACE OF THE NATIONAL  
ASSEMBLY, BUT THAT HE SAW NO ALTERNATIVE TO WORKING WITH IT.  
SEVERAL OF THE GENERALS SUGGESTED HE SECRETLY THREATENED TO PROLONG  
THE ASSEMBLY IF IT WAS NOT MORE RESPONSIVE. THIEU

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SUGGESTED THIS TACK WAS UNREALISTIC, AT WHICH POINT SEVERAL OF THE GENERALS SAID THAT THIEU COULD GET WHAT HE WANTED FROM THE ASSEMBLY IF THE MILITARY WAS BEHIND HIM AND IF HE USED THE FULL POWER OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY.

5. THIEU THEN EXPOUNDED ON HIS CONCEPT OF HOW THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD FUNCTION. THIS EXPOSITION MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE DID NOT INTEND TO REVERSE ANY OF HIS ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS OR CHANGE HIS PLANS TO "CIVILIANIZE" THE GOVERNMENT.

6. DURING THE MEETING KY ASKED THIEU IF HE WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE PLANNED REORGANIZATION OF THE GOVERNMENT, SPECIFICALLY HIS PLANS TO CHANGE THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE CABINET. HOWEVER, THIEU REFUSED TO COMMENT. WHEN PRESSED, THE PRESIDENT SAID HE WOULD MAKE HIS INTENTIONS CLEAR ON THIS SUBJECT BY 13 MAY.

ASKED [REDACTED] LATER IF THIEU HAD GIVEN KY THIS INFORMATION IN PRIVATE. KY SAID NO. KY SAID HE HAD HAD

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A PRIVATE MEETING WITH THIEU ON 13 MAY TO DISCUSS CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, DURING THE MEETING THIEU TALKED IN GENERALITIES AND REFUSED TO SAY WHETHER OR NOT HE PLANNED TO REPLACE PRIME MINISTER LOC WITH TRAN VAN HUONG.

7. [REDACTED] THE GENERALS HAD NOT MET WITH THIEU TO DISSUADE HIM FROM REMOVING LOC. ALTHOUGH KY HAS RESERVATIONS ABOUT HUONG AS A "THIRD CENTER OF EXECUTIVE POWER" MOST OF THE GENERALS ARE NOT OPPOSED TO HUONG OR ANY STRONGLY ANTI-COMMUNIST PREMIER AS LONG AS HE AGREES NOT TO MEDDLE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THE ARMED FORCES. IF THIEU OR A NEW PREMIER ATTEMPTS TO REMOVE BRIGADIER GENERAL NGUYEN NGOC LOAN, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NATIONAL POLICE, OR GENERAL CAO VAN VIEN, KY AND ALL THE SENIOR GENERALS WILL RESIGN.

8. [REDACTED] KY AND THE GENERALS AGREED THAT THE BEST WAY THE GVN COULD INFLUENCE THE PARIS TALKS WAS TO ACHIEVE SOLID

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MILITARY AND POLITICAL PROGRESS IN VIETNAM.

TO DO SO THEY FEEL SOUTH VIETNAM MUST HAVE A STRONG AND UNIFIED GOVERNMENT LED BY THE MILITARY AND THIS WAS THE MESSAGE THEY WERE TRYING TO CONVEY TO THIEU.

~~REDACTED~~ A RECENTLY CAPTURED ENEMY DOCUMENT SAID THE THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WOULD WIN IN PARIS IF THEY WERE PATIENT BECAUSE OF THE SERIOUS CONTRADICTIONS IN THE SAIGON GOVERNMENT. THERE WERE CONFLICTS BETWEEN THIEU AND KY, BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE AND THE LEGISLATURE, BETWEEN THE MILITARY AND THE CIVILIANS, AND BETWEEN THE AMERICANS AND THE VIETNAMESE. EVENTUALLY THE SAIGON GOVERNMENT WOULD COME APART FROM THE PRESSURE OF THESE CONTRADICTIONS. COMMUNIST STRATEGY WAS TO EXACERBATE THESE CONFLICTS. IF THE SAIGON GOVERNMENT COLLAPSED POLITICALLY, THE DISCUSSIONS IN PARIS WOULD BE ACADEMIC.

9. ~~REDACTED~~ THE GENERALS WERE VERY DISCOURAGED OVER THIEU'S UNWILLINGNESS TO MODIFY HIS COURSE. HOW-

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EVER, KHANG MAINTAINED THAT THE GENERALS DID NOT PLAN TO TAKE ANY PRECIPITATE ACTION AGAINST THIEU OR THE GOVERNMENT, UNLESS THE PRESIDENT OFFERED SOME STRONG PROVOCATION.

THE PRESIDENT HAD DECIDED TO "STRENGTHEN" HIS PERSONAL POWER POSITION NOW WHILE HE STILL HAS THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND AMERICAN MILITARY POWER BEHIND HIM. MOST OF THIEU'S ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS, ARE DESIGNED MORE TO STRENGTHEN THIEU'S PERSONAL POWER POSITON THAN TO STRENGTHEN THE GOVERNMENT.

THIEU FAVORS "CIVILIANIZING" THE GOVERNMENT SINCE THIS IS THE BEST WAY HE CAN NEUTRALIZE THE POWER OF THE MILITARY.

THIEU PLANS TO USE THE CHANGES IN THE PROVINCES TO ASSIST HIM IN BUILDING A PERSONAL POLITICAL PARTY IN THE MANNER OF EX-PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM.

10. KY TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE MEETING AT THE JGS COMPOUND TO EXPLAIN TE NEW SELF DEFENSE FORCE. MOST OF THE GENRALS

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WERE VERY SKEPTICAL OF ITS VALUE AND SAID THE MILITARY WANTED NO PART OF IT. HOWEVER, THE CORPS COMMANDERS AGREED TO PROVIDE ARMS AND TRAINING IF REQUIRED.

11. [REDACTED] NO IDEA WHO WOULD BE PRIME MINISTER NEXT WEEK. [REDACTED] RUMOR THAT HUONG WAS RELUCTANT TO TAKE THE JOB SINCE HE HAD HEARD OF KY'S OPPOSITON.

ALL THREE GENERALS PRESENTLY IN THE CABINET, VY, TRI, AND VIEN, STATED AT THE MEETING AT THE JGS THAT THEY WOULD NOT REMAIN IN A SUBSEQUENT CABINET EVEN IF ASKED. [REDACTED]

FAIRLY CERTAIN THAT THIEU WOULD ASK GENERAL TRAN THIEN KHIEM AND LIEUTENANT GENERAL DO CAO TRI TO JOIN A NEW CABINET.

12. FIELD DISSEM: STATE (AMBASSADOR BUNKER, DEPUTY AMBASSADOR BERGER, POLITICAL COUNSELOR) USMACV (GENERAL WESTMORELAND, GENERAL ABRAMS, AMBASSADOR KOMER) CINCPAC PACFLT ARPAC PACAF [REDACTED]

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