

[REDACTED]

EO 12356 1.3(a)(4)

25 October 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Walt W. Rostow
Special Assistant to the President

The Honorable Dean Rusk
Secretary of State

SUBJECT: Results of Nguyen Phong Thiep's
21 October 1968 Visit to Saigon

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2. [REDACTED] Nguyen Phong Thiep, member of the South Vietnamese observer delegation to the Paris talks, [REDACTED] returned to Paris on 22 October 1968 from a one day visit to Saigon, South Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Chanh Thanh instructed Phong to tell South Vietnamese Consul General and observer delegation chief Phan Dang Lam that, until the commencement of second stage talks, substantive discussions between the Americans and the South Vietnamese would take place solely in Saigon and Lam thus bore no responsibilities in this area. This was in response to Lam's complaint that he was not being kept fully informed about talks in Saigon. [REDACTED] Thanh promised to keep Lam better informed, and this has been borne out by an increase in reporting from Saigon to Paris. [REDACTED]

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3. On the composition of the South Vietnamese delegation, Thanh told Thiep that Pham Van Thinh, South Vietnamese Ambassador in Bern, and Le Van Li, Vietnamese delegate to the United Nations Organizations in Geneva, were being added to the South Vietnamese

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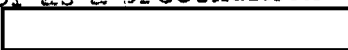
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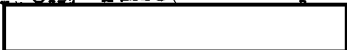


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delegation and would be arriving soon in Paris. Vu Vuong Bac, prominent Saigon lawyer, probably will not join the delegation because of the press of personal business in Saigon. Nguyen Ngoc Linh, Director of Vietnam Presse, has insisted that he be given the personal rank of Ambassador as a precondition for his joining the delegation as spokesman.  Linh bases this demand on his belief that Mr. William Jorden, U. S. Mission spokesman, has the same rank. Thanh told Thiep that he doubted that he could agree to this condition. For the job of military delegate, Thanh said that former IV Corps Commander and Revolutionary Development Chief General Nguyen Duc Thang was being actively considered but that no decision has been made.

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4. During his visit to Saigon, Thiep had a private talk with President Nguyen Van Thieu.  Thieu said that there was no fundamental disagreement between himself and the Americans on the question of ultimately permitting the National Liberation Front to participate in the political life of South Vietnam by standing for public office in free elections. The main difference was rather the point of permitting the Liberation Front to take part in the negotiations without first having established their right to do so in this way. President Thieu said that he was afraid that chaos would result in Saigon if the Liberation Front joined the negotiations as a separate entity. He said that he expected trouble from the military, the Catholics and the militant Buddhists. Among the military, he believed the main trouble would come from company grade officers and lower ranks since the general officers were fairly well under control and the field grade officers could understand why it might be necessary to make concessions to the Liberation Front. He said that he was less confident of the ability of the Catholic hierarchy to control the Catholics, particularly if the militant Buddhists began causing trouble.

