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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4  
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By JW, NARA, Date 5-14-92

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FROM WALT ROSTOW  
TO THE PRESIDENT  
CITE CAP 67667

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Pres file  
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JULY 5, 1967

FOLLOWING IS THE DAILY SITUATION REPORT (NO. 6) ON POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN VIET-NAM --

THERE ARE NO NEW SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS TO REPORT TODAY.

COMMENT ON MILITARY ROLE IN POLITICS

WE NOW HAVE SEVERAL VERSIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS OF THE MEETINGS OF GENERALS WHICH RESULTED IN THE THIEU-KY SLATE. THESE VERSIONS ARE GENERALLY CONSISTENT IN INDICATING THAT THE MEETINGS BEGAN WITH DISCUSSION OF THE "BIG" MINH ISSUE AND THEN TURNED TO DISCUSSION OF THE THIEU AND KY CANDIDACIES. IT ALSO SEEMS QUITE CLEAR THAT THIS LATTER DISCUSSION WAS HIGHLY EMOTIONAL. HOWEVER, WHAT IS STRIKINGLY UNCLEAR IS THE NATURE OF THE UNDERSTANDINGS--IF ANY--ON WHICH KY ACCEPTED THE VICE PRESIDENTIAL SPOT ON A THIEU TICKET. NOR IS IT CLEAR TO WHAT EXTENT ANY UNDERSTANDINGS ARE GENERALLY KNOWN AND ACCEPTED BY THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP.

IN ANY CASE, THE AGREEMENT ON A THIEU-KY SLATE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN REACHED IN A HIGHLY EMOTIONAL ATMOSPHERE, AND TO HAVE LEFT NUMEROUS SCARS AND MUCH BITTERNESS. THE QUESTION OF SUSTAINED MILITARY UNITY BEHIND THE THIEU-KY SLATE THEREFORE REMAINS IN DOUBT.

ANOTHER FACTOR WHICH EMERGES FROM THE VARIOUS VERSIONS OF THE GENERALS' MEETINGS IS THE RENEWED INFLUENCE OF THE CORPS COMMANDERS IN HIGH POLITICAL DECISIONS WITHIN THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP. THIS COULD WEAKEN THE AUTHORITY OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OVER THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY ACTIVITIES OF THE CORPS COMMANDERS AND THUS LEAD TO A RETURN TO "WAR-LORDISM".

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FINALLY, IT SEEMS REASONABLY CLEAR THAT THE DEEP CONCERN AMONG THE GENERALS FOR A SINGLE MILITARY TICKET ARISES IN LARGE PART FROM THEIR EXPECTATION, AND EVEN INSISTENCE, THAT THE ELECTIONS RESULT IN CONTINUED EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT BY THE MILITARY. IF THE MILITARY GET THEIR WAY, IT WOULD BE UP TO AN ELECTED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO PROVIDE SOME POLITICAL CHECK ON THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP. IN ANY CASE, THE ATTITUDE OF THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP INCREASES THE LIKELIHOOD THAT A VICTORY OF THE MILITARY TICKET WILL BE WIDELY CONSIDERED IN SOUTH VIET-NAM AND ELSEWHERE AS A VICTORY FOR THE STATUS QUO. IT ALSO RAISES THE DANGER THAT MILITARY ELEMENTS MIGHT TRY TO UPSET THE RESULTS IF A CIVILIAN TICKET WERE ELECTED.

ACTION REQUIRED

WE ARE REPEATING OUR REQUEST TO EMBASSY SAIGON FOR ITS READING ON THE PRECISE TERMS, MEANING AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE THIEU-KY ARRANGEMENT.

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