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FROM WALT ROSTOW
TO THE PRESIDENT
CITE CAP67526

SANITIZED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

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By ju, NARA, Date 3-11-94

1967 JUN 29 PM 4:49

THURSDAY

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JUNE 29, 1967

FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM WALT ROSTOW

WE CHECKED SAIGON BY TELEPHONE ON THE ASSOCIATED PRESS STORY OF
CONFLICT AMONG THE MILITARY AND MILITARY MOVEMENTS SUGGESTING
A COUP ATTEMPT.

SAIGON SAID THERE WAS NO BASIS FOR THE STORY.

STATE HAS DENIED AS YOU WILL SEE ON TICKER.

THE FOLLOWING CABLE IS THE BEST ACCOUNT WE HAVE ON THE
MILITARY MEETINGS OF THE 28TH.

WESTY IS SEEING VIEN TO GET A MORE AUTHORITATIVE ACCOUNT.

~~SECRET~~ SAIGON 29152

1. WE HAVE RECEIVED REPORT [REDACTED]
RELATING TO RECENT TOP-LEVEL GOVERNMENT OF VIET NAM MILITARY MEETINGS
ON THE SUBJECT OF BIG MINH'S RETURN AND THE UNITY OF THE ARMED
FORCES. [REDACTED] 1.3(a)(4)

2. THE REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE MILITARY MEMBERS OF
THE DIRECTORATE ON JUNE 27 WAS CONFIRMED. THERE WAS AGREEMENT NOT
TO PERMIT BIG MINH'S RETURN AND TO SEND GENERALS VIEN AND LA
TO BANGKOK TO INFORM MINH. GENERAL CHIEU INITIALLY OPPOSED THE
DECISION ON CONSTITUTIONAL GROUNDS BUT ACCEDED TO THE VIEWS OF THE
OTHER GENERALS.

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3. GENERALS VIEN AND LA RETURNED JUNE 28 FROM BANGKOK AND A 5-HOUR MEETING WAS HELD LAST NIGHT TO DISCUSS THE MATTER FURTHER. THE TWO GENERALS REPORTED THAT BIG MINH WAS DETERMINED TO RETURN AND REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE DECISION CONVEYED TO HIM. THE ORIGINAL DECISION AGAINST HIS RETURN WAS REAFFIRMED LAST NIGHT, HOWEVER, AND THE DECISION WAS UNANIMOUS. (COMMENT: PRESUMABLY CERTAIN MEASURES HAVE ALSO BEEN TAKEN TO ASSURE THAT BIG MINH IS NOT ABLE TO EFFECT HIS RETURN BY HIMSELF.)

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4. DURING THE MEETING LAST NIGHT THE OTHER GENERALS FORCED THIEU AND KY TO DISCUSS THEIR CANDIDACIES AND THE QUESTION OF UNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES.

THIEU SAID THAT HE HAD NO PROSPECT OF WINNING, HAD NO ORGANIZATION OR MEANS OR PROGRAM, BUT THAT IT HAD BECOME A MATTER OF HONOR AND PRESTIGE AND HE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO RUN. HE CITED HIS GRIEVANCES CONVERING THE LAST TWO YEARS, SAYING THAT HE HAD BEEN PUSHED ASIDE FROM THE MAIN STREAM OF GOVERNMENT DECISIONS, HAD BEEN KEPT OUT OF THE PUBLIC LIMELIGHT, AND MORE RECENTLY HAD EVEN HAD HIS STATEMENTS CENSORED. REPORTEDLY, KY EXPRESSED HIS REGRET AT THE MISUNDERSTANDING AND APOLOGIZED TO GENERAL THIEU FOR THE ACTIONS TAKEN BY SOME OF HIS SUPPORTERS. ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE, THIS EXCHANGE BETWEEN THIEU AND KY CLEARED THE AIR SOMEWHAT AND WAS A GREAT RELIEF TO THE OTHER GENERAL PRESENT WHO HAD BEEN INCREASINGLY FEELING THE STRAIN OF THE THIEU-KY RIVALRY.

1.3(a)(4)

5. THERE WAS A MEETING ON THE MORNING OF JUNE 28 OF THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM DIVISION COMMANDERS, APPARENTLY ONE OF A SERIES HELD PERIODICALLY AMONG THEM. AT THE MEETING THERE WAS A FULL DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM OF DIVISION WITHIN THE MILITARY AND THE NECESSITY TO AVOID MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE ELECTION PROCESS. IT WAS AGREED THAT THE DIVISION COMMANDERS AND THEIR SUBORDINATE COMMANDERS SHOULD IN NO WAY BECOME INVOLVED IN THE CAMPAIGNS BY THIEU AND KY.

1.3(a)(4)

6. COMMENT: THIS SERIES OF MEETING AMONG THE TOP GENERALS AND THE DIVISION COMMANDERS IS REASSURING AND APPEARS TO REFLECT A GENERAL AWARENESS OF THE DANGERS OF DIVISION WITHIN THE MILITARY ARISING FROM THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.

1.3(a)(4)

IT SEEMS THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME CLEARING OF THE AIR AND PROBABLY SOME PROGRESS IN THE DIRECTION OF STERILIZING THE MILITARY FROM THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. IF THIS REPORT IS ACCURATE, IT WILL AFFORD A USEFUL BASIS FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH THIEU AND KY FOLLOWING UP BY LUNCHEON WITH THEM ON JUNE 19

BUNKER

DTG: 291825Z JUNE 1967

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