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August 2, 1967

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2 Pres. file

Mr. President:

Attached is today's situation report on political developments
in Viet Nam.

W. W. Rostow

WJJ:mlc

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Situation Report in Viet-Nam

August 2, 1967

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NEJ 94-191

By 1-8, NARA, Date 9-12-94

Activities of General Loan

National Police Chief Loan continues to chafe at restrictions placed on his political activity by Ky and at being made the "scapegoat" for the backfiring of Ky's political heavy-handedness in June. Loan evidently blames some of the other generals and the Americans, claiming the latter really favor the civilian candidates in the election. He also claims to have proposed that Ky send him to Thailand during the campaign to preclude further charges of police interference in the election, but Ky has not yet agreed. However, in the same conversation Loan stated contradictorily that he will begin campaign activities on behalf of the Thieu-Ky ticket on August 3 whether he receives the order to do so or not.

We doubt that Loan's proposal to go to Thailand is serious. Despite recent political inactivity on his part, we expect Loan to take an active if more discreet part in the Thieu-Ky campaign. We are relying on Ky to keep Loan in line, and Ambassador Bunker has had this problem much in mind.

Militant Buddhist Stirrings

In a letter to General Thieu made public yesterday, Buddhist patriarch Thich Tinh Kiet accused him of sabotaging Buddhist unity by issuing a decree invalidating the statute of the present Unified Buddhist Association and substituting a new one. The new statute would favor the moderate Tam Chau Buddhists at the expense of the Tri Quang militants.

The letter is the first salvo in a possible pre-election campaign by the militant Buddhists against the Thieu-Ky ticket. They can be expected to create as much difficulty for the GVN as their strength permits, although their organization has still not recovered from the setbacks it suffered last year. The moderate Buddhists support the Thieu-Ky candidacy but are doing so quietly without the drama the militants can employ. Their position may suffer from Tam Chau's absence on a trip abroad for most if not all the campaign period.

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Huong Calls for Thieu-Ky Resignation

Presidential candidate Tran Van Huong called publicly on Thieu and Ky to resign their government positions during the campaign, lest a victory by them be irreparably marred if the voters thought the elections were unfair. Huong admitted they were within their legal rights to remain in office, but he obviously considers the matter a useful political issue which he can flog in his campaign.

Both Thieu and Ky have told Bunker they have no intention of stepping down and losing the advantages of incumbency. Bunker believes they have not taken more than normal advantage so far.

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