

~~Confidential~~
2- Presidential file
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Monday, August 21, 1967
3:30 p.m.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Mr. President:

Attached is today's situation report on Vietnamese politics. I call your attention to the voter registration figure in paragraph 1. The 5.8 million is half a million more than for the Assembly election last September. It is also more than a third of Viet-Nam's population (it would be about 65 million in the U.S. on a comparative population base). Not bad for a country at war.

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William J. Jorden

Att.

SECRET-EXDIS Attachment

Viet-Nam Political Situation Report

August 21, 1967

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NEJ 94-299

By —, NARA, Date 12-15-54

Campaign Developments

The final posting of voter lists reveals a total voter registration of over 5.8 million (compared with a total registration of almost 5.3 million for Constituent Assembly elections last September). All provinces show a gain of voter registration over last year, except for small decreases in three provinces and in Saigon.

The presidential candidates or their representatives spoke before about 3,000 people in Nha Trang on August 20. The meeting went well and the crowd appeared interested and receptive. Once again, Thieu and Ky were represented by local supporters. The major civilian candidates, Huong and Suu, were present.

The Upper House campaign has finally begun to take shape. However, even well-educated Vietnamese have expressed puzzlement as to how to choose among the 48 Senate lists. The Senate race has not so far been marked by any serious debate on issues. The peace issue is getting considerable discussion, but only in highly general terms.

Reaction to Javits' Proposal

The Embassy on balance believes that Senator Javits' proposal is not likely to get serious consideration from the Vietnamese Government or the Assembly. The Embassy notes that it is by no means clear that all civilian candidates favor postponement of the elections and that vast administrative preparations for the elections have been underway for more than two months, all geared to the September 3 election date. Thieu told Bunker it would be very unwise to postpone the election date.

Conversations with Thieu and Ky

Ky told Ambassador Bunker that he and Thieu plan an early press conference to repeat their determination that

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the elections be fair and honest. Ky and Thieu said they would accompany the civilian candidates on some of their future trips. Thieu told Bunker that he was not sure that he would win the election and that he would support whatever government was elected. Thieu also said that he would make every effort to see that the elections were honest.

Thieu's campaign manager has indicated to an Embassy officer that Thieu and Ky would work well together. However, in discussing Thieu's views of the organization of the government after elections, Thieu's campaign manager's remarks, together with continuing reports that Ky is maintaining his own personal campaign organization, reflect a continuing division of opinion between the Thieu and Ky camps.

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