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J. F. Kennedy

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Wednesday, August 23, 67
4:00 p.m. (4:30)

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Mr. President:

Attached is the situation report on
the Viet-Nam political situation.

William J. Jorden

Att.

~~SECRET~~-EXDIS Attachment

932

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Viet-Nam Political Situation Report

August 23, 1967

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NEJ 94-299

By 400, NARA, Date 12-15-94

Campaign Developments

Presidential campaigning continues on schedule. Embassy Saigon notes that public interest and candidate activity are mounting and that there is every prospect of a high voter turn out. The Embassy states that village interest in elections is reportedly increasing. In summary, the Embassy considers prospects are now promising for reasonably free and fair elections, though it cautions that a great deal could still happen in the next 12 days before election day.

In a revised but still very tentative assessment based largely on additional information and impressions from the provinces, the Embassy estimates that Thieu and Ky will get between 35 and 45% of the vote, that Huong will be second with between 25 and 30%, and that although Suu appears to be stronger now, he will run third with around 20%.

The Embassy states that the Senate campaign is developing rapidly. There are increasing indications that the Vietnamese Government is supporting six Senate lists, but the Embassy says that there is little evidence that this support amounts to much. The Embassy points out that even if the reports are true, it seems to be a reasonable enough action since the Vietnamese Government will have to work with the Senate. Moreover, the leading civilian candidates have associated themselves with certain Senate lists. Nevertheless, the issue of Government support for six Senate lists could be seized upon by civilian candidates and other Upper House slates as further evidence of the Government's bad faith and attempts to rig the elections.

Thieu-Ky Relations and Post-Election Thinking

Ky recently stated to an American observer that he plans to announce "later" that Thieu and he, if elected, will offer

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government positions to some of the more competent defeated candidates. Ky claimed, for example, to be considering offering Huong the position of Chairman of the Inspectorate. Ky foresaw an effective working relationship with Thieu in the new government, but stressed that it would be a delicate relationship which would evolve over a period of time. Ambassador Bunker has had very much in mind how some of the defeated candidates might be utilized to broaden civilian participation in the new government if the Thieu-Ky slate wins.

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