

~~1-Suspense~~
2-Presidential file
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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Wednesday, August 17, 1967
7:00 p.m.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Mr. President:

Attached is today's Viet-Nam
situation report.

Bill
William J. Jorden

Att.

~~SECRET~~ - EXDIS Attachment

Viet-Nam Situation Report

August 16, 1967

Campaign Developments

The presidential campaign appears generally back on the tracks, and conversations with Ky and with Thieu's brother reflect an encouragingly healthy attitude toward the campaign in the Thieu-Ky camp.

Nine presidential candidates proceeded on schedule to Bien Hoa on August 16 for their first joint appearance since the abortive Quang Tri episode. Thieu and Ky were not present. According to Reuters, Huong received the biggest response from a small and generally apathetic audience when he stated that a political solution to South Viet-Nam's troubles was more important than military victory. The Thieu-Ky representative stated that the military ticket, if elected, would immediately move to solve the problem of ending the war, but with conditions that would protect South Viet-Nam.

Huong gave a press conference on August 15 in which he continued to air charges on unfair election practices on the part of Thieu and Ky. Huong reiterated his threat to reconsider his participation in the elections if unfair practices did not end soon.

Bunker-Ky Conversation

Referring to continuing charges and counter-charges by presidential candidates, Bunker again emphasized to Ky that he and Thieu can afford to lean over backwards to run a campaign satisfactory to all candidates. Bunker counseled Ky to ignore criticisms unless they turned up legitimate complaints, in which case remedial actions should be taken. Ky said that he and Thieu had agreed to try to overcome mistaken impressions abroad about the elections by explaining what the Vietnamese Government has done and is doing to assure free and honest elections.

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Conversation with Thieu's Brother

Thieu's brother told an Embassy officer he is keeping in touch with various civilian candidates, particularly Huong. He agreed that the way must be kept open for broad civilian-military collaboration after the elections. He thought that personal relations between Thieu and Ky were satisfactory. The Embassy officer emphasized the importance of assuring a free election, including the appearance of equality of opportunity between government and civilian candidates. The Embassy officer suggested that Thieu or Ky should appear with the civilian candidates at least at some of their joint official appearances.