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By , NARA, Date 12-15-94

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Pres file

TEXT OF CABLE FROM AMBASSADOR BUNKER (Saigon, 4958)

SUBJECT: Post Election Priorities in Vietnam

*Put in folder
for Pres. for
use at 6pm
meeting with
Pres 9/6/67*

If Thieu and Ky win the election, which now seems apparent, I believe we should use our influence immediately after the election to have them do the following:

A. Seek to mobilize broad-based popular support by:

1. Appointment of prominent civilians, including some leading opposition candidates or supporters in the new government. The Prime Minister should be a respected civilian with support of an important political element. For example, Tran Van Huong and Dr. Dan should be offered positions in the new government, or asked to suggest candidates for certain positions in return for their support. The focus should be on individuals with the idea of quality as well as popular support.

2. Association in some way with the new government (not necessarily as officials) of representatives of various religious and political groups (Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Northern and Southern Catholics, moderate Buddhists, VNQDD, MRS, Youth, etc.) as a basis for establishing a broadly representative political party supporting the government and in the Assembly, capable of combatting the Viet Cong politically.

3. Adoption of a progressive program and identification of that program with that of a former national hero, so as to give the new government an idealistic appeal or philosophy which will compete with that declared by the Viet Cong. Specifically we might suggest to the new government the name of Nguyen Hue (Emperor Quang Trung) who in the Eighteenth Century became a great military leader, arising from the peasantry, at a time when the nation was divided, had been at war for 20 years, and was torn by corruption; who united the country and drove out the Chinese; who embarked on a program of (a) elimination of corruption, (b) introduction of social justice, (c) land reform, (d) decentralization of control to the provincial level, (e) education of the masses in the villages, (f) general conscription, (g) a national census and universal use of I. D. cards, (h) religious tolerance. (See "A Modern History of Vietnam" by Nguyen Phut Tan, pages 145-152). Nguyen Hue was from Central Vietnam and may not be a "hero" to the Delta Vietnamese, but at the moment we have no better suggestion of an historical revolutionary leader.

B. Work on a more continuous, although informal, basis with the U.S. Mission. Specifically, have regular (either weekly or semi-monthly) lunches between

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senior Vietnamese officials and their U.S. counterparts. Also, similar regular lunches and informal meetings should be arranged by other official U.S. and counterpart Vietnamese dealing with particular areas of interest, such as pacification or economic matters.

C. Adopt a program which would include the following:

1. Public recognition of (a) the necessity of every Vietnamese contributing to the war effort to the best of his ability, and (b) the necessity of laws and decrees resulting in the most effective utilization of manpower, including amendment of the Draft Law to reduce the induction age to 18, and to extend term of service, at least of key commissioned and noncommissioned officers, for one year; change of draft policy to begin drafting at the younger instead of the older ages; and recognition of the necessity of further amendments to exempt key civilians after an adequate manpower study has pinpointed the categories necessary to be exempt.

2. Reaffirmation of ongoing programs relating to the Armed Forces, including programs to (a) urgently promote the MACV program for improvement of ARVN (which includes improved merit promotion system for officers and noncoms and a military inspectorate), (b) eliminate corrupt and inefficient leaders, (c) expand the Regional Force and Popular Force and adopt MACV recommended system of U.S. advisory teams, operating with Regional Force and Popular Force for six-month periods, (d) encourage greater integration with U.S. forces or joint operations, and (e) reorient the concept of pacification role of ARVN, Regional Force, and Popular Force in accordance with MACV suggestions from static "support of Revolutionary Development" concept to mobile, area security concept, with night patrolling, and adopt inspection and grading system to insure implementation of concept.

3. Making the Province Chief the "key" man in pacification, giving him operational control over all military and paramilitary forces engaged in pacification in the provinces, over resources for development programs in the provinces, and over technical cadre (agricultural, engineering, education, public health, public works, etc.) based in the provinces, except possibly cadre specially trained for selective economic production programs properly administered from Saigon. He should appoint the District Chiefs, who should be under his control. He should report to the Corps Commanders on military matters and directly to the Central Government (or to civilian deputies of the Corps Commanders) on civil matters. All Province Chiefs should be reappraised and only top men retained, and an inspection, training and rating system should be established.

4. Centralizing all rural development efforts in non-Revolutionary Development hamlets (education, agriculture, public works, public health, etc.) under one coordinated control in the same manner in which they are now centralized under the Ministry of Revolutionary Development in Revolutionary Development hamlets; funding resources at the provincial level for non-Revolutionary Development hamlets in the same manner in which they are presently funded for Revolutionary Development hamlets, so that

coordinated programs can be established in each village with flexibility and with resources quickly available; establishing the principle that Village Councils should determine their own programs and priorities, and that District and Provincial government should review these programs and be responsive to village needs by sending cadres to advise on programs and resources to implement programs, the villages furnishing the labor; also making changes in Ministry organization to insure that a large proportion of total workers are in the provinces, and to insure that most of the provincial workers spend most of their time in the field, rather than headquarters.

5. Construction of an adequate number of screening and detention centers in the provinces and permanent prisons on islands on a priority basis. Also, the passing of laws to insure (a) it is a crime to be a Viet Cong civilian cadre, (b) spelling out the nature and degree of the crime, the penalty is stiff, (c) trials can be had quickly in detention centers by military court in what would normally be no more than one hour per trial, and (d) convicted cadre will be sent to the island prison, normally for long terms (unless they are accepted as Hoi Chanh by fingering their Viet Cong associates). Judges will be at least three per detention center, will be provided from among Army men with legal training, and, if not enough, more will have to be conscripted.

6. Paying higher salaries to selected Government of Vietnam officials, including the military, particularly those officials able to control corruption or in a position to be tempted by corruption. This should be accompanied by declaration against corruption, appointment and proper implementation of inspectorate with adequate powers to prosecute corrupt officials, and adoption of new laws, if necessary, against corruption by public officials.

7. Reaffirmation of National Reconciliation Proclamation and Chieu Hoi program; adoption of a program to employ Hoi Chanh, including amendment of security clearance procedures; formation of National Reconciliation Commission under the Ministry of Information and Chieu Hoi to be composed of prominent Vietnamese to recommend actions to implement the National Reconciliation Program.

8. Granting to the villages power to enforce land rental laws and laws prohibiting collection of back rents on land taken from Viet Cong control or for tenants who have escaped from Viet Cong control; protection by the Government of tenancy in contested areas where security is expanding; also, promulgation of laws designed to insure tenure of renters; also, offers to purchase land which will then be resold to those living on the land; also, land tax.

9. Adoption of the whole of the "Operation Take-Off" pacification program, parts of which have been hereinabove enumerated.

10. Establishment of U.S. joint control over expenditures of counterpart piasters by reinstituting sign-off by U.S. advisors at provincial level, and U.S. retention of control of all U.S. resources until finalization.

11. Revitalization of the veterans program to provide for care and training of the injured veterans, establishment of two veterans hospitals and land resettlement of veterans and their widows and orphans.

12. Commitment to effective measures to increase receipts from domestic taxes and tariffs and revision of present monetary policies, laying basis for increased economic development efforts. Development efforts should be focused on increasing agricultural output, particularly on programs for increased production of rice and pork, and, in this connection, (a) wholesale price of U.S. rice should be increased to 21 piasters per kilo, so as to increase prices received by peasants for their paddies, and (b) government restrictions on commerce should be reduced where not essential to denial of vital goods to the Viet Cong.

We are establishing a committee of all appropriate Missions agencies to (a) further refine the suggestions we can make for a governmental program, and (b) devise a written statement of platform and principles which the new government can publicly adopt. We believe this should be ready for government consideration by the third week in September so that it can be announced by the new government in early October. Insofar as the platform is concerned, we may wish to contact the governmental leaders earlier so as to avoid their premature publication of a different platform.