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September 2, 1967

Saigon 4779

1. In luncheon conversation with Political Counselor, September 2, Nguyen Van Kieu, General Thieu's brother, discussed election prospects and planning for the post-election period.
2. Kieu thought that the Suu-Dan ticket would run ahead of Huong-Truyen, followed by Ha Thuc Ky, Nguyen Hoa Hiep, and Truong Dinh Dau. He ascribed Suu's recent overtaking of Huong to support from some major Buddhist elements, including the An Quang group, and to support in the countryside which he claimed was the result of quiet word being passed by the Viet Cong. Kieu seemed confident that his brother's ticket would win but he thought that its percentage would not be as large as perhaps had been earlier expected.
3. Kieu said he had been busy keeping in touch with various civilian leadership groups, particularly supporters of Huong and the Buddhists. He acknowledged there was some possibility of troubles fermented by the extremist Buddhists after the elections, but he thought on balance this was unlikely. He considered Thien Minh to be the leader of the hard core in this respect and thought Tri Quang was advocating a more moderate course among the An Quang group.
4. Kieu launched immediately into a discussion of plans for broad post-election collaboration among the various groups competing in the election. He believed, from his most recent talks with the Huong camp, that there was still a possibility that Huong might accept the premiership in the event Thieu is elected and personally appeals to him to join in a "new team." Kieu suggested that if Huong did not accept, Huong might propose to Thieu that Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Luu Vien be appointed. Kieu said that if this were done, it would be handled publicly in such a way as to make clear that Vien was picked by Huong in order to draw the maximum political support behind him. In response to Kieu's question, Political Counselor agreed that Vien was a highly respected and capable southerner who was accepted by many different elements and that Huong's sponsorship would give him greater strength as a representative of the civilian-southern element.
5. Kieu was confident that Thieu and Ky would continue their collaboration and said it was his brother's intention to create a team at the top representing a broad political base and capable of working effectively together. He agreed it was desirable that other civilian elements be offered leading positions in the government and mention was made of Pham Quang Dan and Ha Thuc Ky. Kieu said that as an old Dai Viet who knew Ky extremely well, he was doubtful that genuine collaboration could be expected from him. He considered Ky a

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fanatical Dai Viet, interested largely in strengthening his own closely-knit party organization. He agreed it was useful, however, to encourage such groups to work with other elements for the good of the country.

6. Looking ahead to the future operation of the government, Kieu said he personally favored setting up some "brain trust" groups to consider the formulation of policies and programs for the new government. He hoped that such groups could also meet regularly and informally with selected American colleagues to discuss their ideas at an early stage in order to encourage mutual cooperation and eliminate possible misunderstanding. Political Counselor said he thought this would be highly desirable, ~~etc, etc, etc~~

7. Kieu hoped that the government of Viet Nam, U.S. Government, Republic of Korea and Republic of Cambodia could develop closer collaboration in the information field. He agreed that it was also important to improve government of Viet Nam information activities in other Asian and European countries in particular. Political Counselor suggested that one of the important programs to be given new life under the new government would be that of national reconciliation, since an elected and broadly representative government would be in a position to give meaning to this program. Kieu agreed.

8. Kieu said that if the election went in favor of General Thieu, he (Kieu) planned to return to Taipei only to close out his affairs and would return to Saigon permanently. He said he would make a swing around Bangkok, Seoul, and Tokyo before returning in order to talk with leaders and friends in those places, as well as in Taipei. He spoke vaguely of assuming a role as personal advisor to his brother. Kieu said that General Thieu was exhausted by the strain of the last weeks and planned to go away election day for 2 or 3 days of complete rest.

9. Comment: It continues to be difficult to evaluate degree to which Kieu influences his brother, but it appears at least that he has been busy keeping in touch with other civilian elements and seeking to preserve the possibility of peaceful collaboration after the elections. His comments regarding the prospects for such collaboration and the attitude of the An Quang Buddhists are undoubtedly optimistic. It seems probable from his and other comments that Thieu, if elected, will seek to work for as broadly based a coalition as he thinks feasible.

10. In separate conversation September 2 between Lansdale and General Hieu, latter said he intended to follow pacification very closely and personally. He also confirmed his intention to make use of General Thang's talents, giving him full responsibility for rural forces and popular forces, as one of the major

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elements in pacification. Lansdale stressed importance of Thieu making genuine effort to work closely and sincerely with Ky and others.

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