

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Monday, October 2, 1967

15
Pres file

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

These three items tell us:

- 1) Thieu still thinks he will get a pro-validation vote;
- 2) The questions Secretary Rusk put to Bunker yesterday on alternatives if the vote goes against validation.
- 3) The Vietnamese government's (and Bunker's) proposed course of action in case the vote goes against validation.

W. Rostow

JORDEN

JA

RECEIVED
WHCA



1.3(a)(4)

115a

1967 OCT 2 05 09

(1)

SANITIZED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NY 94-406

By CG, NARA, Date 1-2-77

DLAS12
DE YEKADL 6492R 2740455
ZKZK OO ZSL DE
O 2204 54Z ZYH
FM CIA
TO WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM
CNO
AFSSO USAF
DIA/ISIC
NIC
STATE (RCI)
SSO ARLINGTON HALL STATION
JCS
SSO ACSI DA
DIRNSA COMMAND CENTER
CIA-OCI
ZEM

[REDACTED] (ADVANCE)
COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM
DOI 2 OCTOBER 1967
SUBJECT VIEWS OF DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE BLOC LEADER ON VALIDATION ISSUE
[REDACTED]

1.3(a)(4)

ACQ VIETNAM, SAIGON (2 OCTOBER 1967)
SOURCE [REDACTED]

1.3(a)(4)

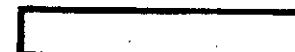
1. DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE BLOC (DAB) LEADER [REDACTED] STATED
[REDACTED] THAT DAB MEMBERS AND CERTAIN OTHERS HAVE
AGREED TO VOTE FOR VALIDATION OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION BUT WISH
TO DO SO BY MEANS OF A SECRET BALLOT.

1.3(a)(4)

PRESIDENT-ELECT THIEU, [REDACTED] HAS SAID THIS METHOD
IS ACCEPTABLE TO HIM.

[REDACTED] PLANNED TO HOLD A DAB CAUCUS MONDAY MORNING AND [REDACTED] AN ASSEMBLY
VOTE COULD COME BY NOON, ALTHOUGH A LATER VOTE WAS ALSO POSSIBLE.
WHEN THE 1 OCTOBER SESSION ENDED, THE PRO-VALIDATION DEPUTIES WERE
CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC AND FELT THAT ABOUT 60 PERCENT OF THE
DEPUTIES HAD BEEN LINED UP FOR A FAVORABLE VOTE. HOWEVER,
THE OPPOSITION IS DISCIPLINED, WHEREAS THE PRO-VALIDATION GROUP IS
NOT. THE 2 OCTOBER MORNING SESSION WILL BE DEVOTED TO
DISCUSSION OF A REPORT PREPARED BY THE ELECTION COMMITTEE ON IRREG-
ULARITIES AT POLLING PLACES.

2. FIELD DISSEM: STATE (AMBASSADOR BUNKER, DEPUTY AMBASSADOR
LOCKE, POLITICAL COUNSELOR) USMACV (GENERAL WESTMORELAND, AMBASSADOR
CHIEF CINCPAC (ADMIRAL SHARP AND POLAD)
[REDACTED]



1.3(a)(4)

COPY LBJ LIBRARY

URGENT TELEGRAM Department of State

047004

~~SECRET~~

Classification

ACTION: Amembassy SAIGON IMMEDIATE

30 SEP 67

115-b

STATE

NODIS

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM SECRETARY

1. We know you are considering the contingency of the Assembly's invalidation of the Presidential election, and wish to have your views urgently. We believe we might face two chief possibilities:

a) The military leadership would seek to continue junta rule indefinitely, including probably the dissolution of the Assembly;

b) The existing laws governing such a situation could be upheld whereby the Assembly and the Directorate would face the need to prepare a new presidential election;

c) There may, of course, be other alternatives.

2. These **alternatives offer** unpleasant and undesirable prospects. To accept **continued junta rule** indefinitely would almost inevitably lead to civil disorder, giving Tri Quang, Suu, Dzu and student leaders the issue **they seek**. The Government might retain the ability to control the situation through the police and armed forces, but this would probably require strong repressive action. Moreover, it would

Drafted by: The Secretary

EA-PCHabib/EA/VN-REH

Clearances:

2030

Telegraphic transmission and

action approved by:

The Secretary

EA - Mr. Bundy

S/S - Mr. Brown

~~SECRET~~

Classification

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NIJ 94-405

By 40, NARA, Date 3-29-95

COPY LBJ LIBRARY

~~SECRET~~
Classification

be virtually impossible for us to defend this course of action with domestic and international opinion in view of our strong commitment to the establishment of constitutional representative government.

3. On the other hand, to side with the rule of law could well run against the junta's instincts and place us in direct confrontation with the military leadership. It could thus lead to disruption of government programs and to considerable instability, both because the military would not easily accept another election and because the civilian politicians are not likely to show greater cohesive leadership than at present.

4. Another alternative would be for the Directorate to return the question to the Assembly for reconsideration, perhaps with a series of questions on which precise answers are required. For example, it might be that precise information might lead to use of Articles 53 and 54 of the Presidential Election Law without ^{invalidation} ~~reconsideration~~ of entire election.

5. Still another alternative would be to proceed with the election of the Lower House on October 22 while the Directorate and the Assembly determine what to do about presidential election.

6. I am sure you fully understand the gravity of the issues for American and international opinion as well as for Vietnam. I hope our concerns will prove to be needless and that Assembly will validate elections. If this does not occur, we shall be faced with urgent decisions about alternatives and our reactions to them.

END

~~SECRET~~

WIRE TELEGRAM

Department of State

Action

00 RUEHC
DE RUMJIR 7349/1 2741136
ZNY SSSSS

Info

O 011120Z OCT 67 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7952.

STATE GRNC

BT

010Q

1967 OCT 1 AM 9:00

~~SECRET~~ SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 7349

NODIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

REF: STATE 47004

1. I HAVE, OF COURSE, BEEN GIVING VERY SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO THE PROBLEMS THAT WOULD FOLLOW SHOULD THE ASSEMBLY INVALIDATE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND I'VE HAD EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH MEMBERS OF MY STAFF ON THIS SUBJECT. THE FOLLOWING SETS FORTH MY BEST JUDGMENT ON THESE DEVELOPMENTS AND HOW WE SHOULD ACT TOWARDS THEM:

2. YOU WILL RECALL THAT GENERAL THIEU TOLD ME ON SEPTEMBER 29 (STATE 7319) THAT IF A VOTE WERE TO GO AGAINST HIM HE THOUGHT THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL WOULD ASK FOR A RECONSIDERATION OF THE ASSEMBLY'S VOTE

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 7349 ~~SECRET~~
AND MIGHT THUS OBTAIN VALIDATION. I WOULD THINK THIS IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE THE COURSE THEY WOULD PURSUE. IN THIS CONNECTION I HAVE CAUSED ARTICLE 56 OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION LAW TO BE BROUGHT TO THIEU'S ATTENTION. AS WE NOTED IN SAIGON 7292, ARTICLE 56 OF THE ELECTION LAW STATES THAT THE ASSEMBLY CAN ANNUL THE ELECTION ENTIRELY "IF IT FINDS THAT IRREGULARITIES CONFIRMED BY THE CENTRAL ELECTION COUNCIL, OR BY A RULING OF A COURT, COULD OPEN TO QUESTION THE HONESTY OF THE VOTING AND AFFECT THE GENERAL RESULTS OF THE ELECTION" THIS IS THE ONLY PROVISION OF THE LAW UNDER WHICH THE ASSEMBLY COULD PROCLAIM ANNULMENT OF THE ENTIRE ELECTION EVEN THOUGH IT HAS SOUGHT TO ARROGATE ITSELF BROADER POWERS TO DO SO BY THE FREE INTERPRETATION IT HAS CHOSEN TO GIVE ARTICLE 113 OF THE CONSTITUTION AND ARTICLE 50 OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION LAW, THE ARTICLES WHICH GIVE THE ASSEMBLY GENERAL POWER TO CONTROL THE PROPRIETY OF THE

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NEJ 94-405

By inf, NARA, Date 3-29-95

~~SECRET~~

--2- SAIGON 7349, OCTOBER 1, SECTION 1 OF 2

ELECTIONS. AS ALSO NOTED IN SAIGON 7292, THE CENTRAL ELECTION COUNCIL REPORTED THAT IT WAS UNABLE TO CONFIRM ANY OF THE IRREGULARITIES ALLEGED IN COMPLAINTS FILED

PAGE 3 RUMJIR 7349/1 ~~SECRET~~
WITH IT. IT WOULD THEREFOR SEEM LOGICAL, IN THE EVENT OF ANNULMENT, FOR THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE TO ASK FOR RECONSIDERATION OF THE ASSEMBLY VOTE ON THE GROUNDS THAT IN VOTING FOR ANNULMENT THE ASSEMBLY EXCEEDED ITS POWER AS ESTABLISHED UNDER THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION LAW.

3. ADMITTEDLY, THE ACTION OF THE ASSEMBLY IN THIS INSTANCE IS NOT A LEGISLATIVE ACTION AND THUS THE RIGHT OF THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE TO CALL FOR A RECONSIDERATION IS IN SOME DOUBT. NEVERTHELESS, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I AM INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT UNLESS A MAJOR GROUP LIKE THE DEMOCRATIC-ALLIANCE BLOC IS DETERMINED TO BLOCK IT, THE ASSEMBLY WOULD AGREE TO RECONSIDER.

4. BETWEEN THE INITIAL VOTE AND RECONSIDERATION IT WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR THIEU AND KY TO MOVE FIRMLY TO ASSURE THE NECESSARY SWITCH OF VOTES. SHOULD KY FAIL TO COOPERATE TO ASSURE THAT THE DEMOCRATIC-ALLIANCE BLOC IS BROUGHT INTO LINE, THE SECOND VOTE IS LIKELY TO FAIL.

PAGE 4 RUMJIR 7349/1 ~~SECRET~~

5. SHOULD THE ASSEMBLY CONTINUE TO REFUSE TO VALIDATE THE ELECTION, OUR BEST ESTIMATE IS THAT THE FOLLOWING PATTERN OF EVENTS WOULD FOLLOW: A) THE SENATE IS ALREADY DULY ELECTED AND CONFIRMED AND THIEU HAS INDICATED TO ME THAT HE INTENDS TO INSTALL THE SENATE ON THE 5TH OF OCTOBER (SAIGON 6624). I BELIEVE HE WOULD DO THIS. B) I ALSO THINK THAT GVN WOULD GO AHEAD WITH THE ELECTIONS FOR THE LOWER HOUSE AND WOULD PUSH AHEAD AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE TOWARD INSTALLING THE NEW ASSEMBLY, THEREBY ABOLISHING THE PRESENT ASSEMBLY. C) IN CONSULTATION WITH THE NEW ASSEMBLY THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT COULD THEN DETERMINE ON THE FUTURE COURSE TO FOLLOW. IT SEEMS LOGICAL THAT IT WOULD AT THAT TIME DECIDE ON A DATE FOR NEW PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND WE MIGHT HOPE THAT AT THE SAME TIME

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

-3- SAIGON 7349, OCTOBER 1, SECTION 1 OF 2

THE ASSEMBLY WOULD SHOW A WILLINGNESS TO WRITE A NEW AND MORE REALISTIC PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION LAW AVOIDING THE MANY PITFALLS IN THE PRESENT LAW (COMMENT: THE MILITARY IN FACT HAVE THEMSELVES TO BLAME FOR THE WEAKNESS OF THE PRESENT LAW SINCE THEY DELIBERATELY ENCOURAGED THE PROVISIONS PERMITTING MULTIPLE CIVILIAN

PAGE 5 RUMJIR 7349/1 ~~SECRET~~

CANDIDATES IN A DESIRE TO DIVIDE THE CIVILIAN VOTE.) D) IT WOULD SEEM WISE, AND I BELIEVE WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE THEN, TO SET A NEW ELECTION DATE SOME MONTHS AWAY IN ORDER TO LET THE COUNTRY QUIET DOWN AND RECOVER FROM THE PLETHORA OF FIVE ELECTIONS IN 14 MONTHS WHILE ENGAGING IN A CRITICAL AND BITTER WAR.

6. THE NEW SENATE WHICH THIEU EXPECTS TO INSTALL THIS COMING WEEK SHOULD BE A CONSIDERABLE IMPROVEMENT ON THE PRESENT ASSEMBLY. ITS MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES EXCELLENT INDIVIDUALS WITH WHOM THIEU IS ALREADY BEGINNING CLOSE CONSULTATION AND THERE IS REASON TO HOPE THAT IT WILL EXERT A CONSTRUCTIVE AND RESPONSIBLE INFLUENCE ON THE COURSE OF EVENTS. HOPEFULLY, ALSO THE LOWER HOUSE WHEN ELECTED WILL PROVE TO BE MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE FOR THE MEMBERS WILL BE ELECTED BY CONSTITUENCIES AND THEIR POLITICAL FUTURE WILL DEPEND ON RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR TOWARDS THEIR CONSTITUENTS. PRESUMABLY THEY WILL THUS BE LESS RESPONSIVE TO THE POLITICAL CONNIVING OF THE VARIOUS CLIQUES IN SAIGON. ADMITTEDLY, THE PRESENT ASSEMBLY WAS ALSO ELECTED BY CONSTITUENCY BUT MANY OF THE MEMBERS (PARTICULARLY THE TROUBLEMAKERS) ARE MEN WHO NOW HAVE NO POLITICAL FUTURE AND ARE GUIDED ONLY BY SELKSH AND TO SOME EXTENT VENGEFUL MOTIVES.

7. THE FOREGOING IS A HOPEFUL PREDICTION AND I AM WELL AWARE THAT THINGS SELDOM IF EVER FOLLOW SUCH A SMOOTH COURSE IN VIETNAMESE POLITICS; HOWEVER, IT IS A PATTERN WHICH I BELIEVE THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS LIKELY TO TRY TO FOLLOW AND IT IS CERTAINLY ONE WHICH I THINK WE SHOULD

BUNKER

BT

~~SECRET~~

TELEGRAM. Department of State

~~SECRET~~

00 RUEHC

DE RUMJIR 734972 2741150

ZNY SSSSS

O 011120Z OCT 67 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7953

STATE CRNC

BT

~~SECRET~~ SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 7349

NODIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

ENCOURAGE. AFTER ALL, THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT, WHICH WILL OF COURSE CONTINUE IN POWER SHOULD THE ELECTIONS BE ANNULLED, IS THE GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS MADE POSSIBLE THE GREAT STRIDES TOWARD DEMOCRACY, WHICH VIET-NAM HAS TAKEN IN THE PAST YEAR AND A HALF. IT SEEMS TO ME ILLOGICAL THAT THAT SAME GOVERNMENT WOULD NOW WANT TO JETTISON ALL THAT IT HAS ACHIEVED.

8. THERE MAY OF COURSE BE PRESSURE FROM CERTAIN MILITARY QUARTERS TO THROW OUT THE WHOLE CIVILIAN STRUCTURE AND RETURN TO FULL MILITARY RULE BUT UNLESS THIS REACHES PROPORTIONS WHICH RESULT IN A SPLIT AMONG THE

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 7349/2 ~~SECRET~~
GENERALS AND A QUASI-COUP SITUATION, I WOULD NOT FORESEE THAT THE MILITARY WOULD FOLLOW SUCH A COURSE. MOREOVER, THERE IS GROWING EVIDENCE THAT MANY OF THE MILITARY BELIEVE THAT THEY SHOULD WITHDRAW FROM POLITICS AND I BELIEVE THAT WITH THE LEVERAGE WE POSSESS WE CAN PREVENT A REVERSION TO FULL MILITARY RULE. I ALSO CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE MILITARY LEADERS ARE INTELLIGENT ENOUGH TO REALIZE THAT SUCH A COURSE COULD WELL JEOPARDIZE THE WHOLE FUTURE OF THE U.S. ASSISTANCE TO VIET-NAM.

9. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT I BELIEVE THE SITUATION IN THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL, OR MORE SPECIFICALLY AMONG THE SENIOR GENERALS, WILL NOT BE STRAINED IN THE EVENT OF AN ANNULMENT. IT WILL BE. I WOULD ANTICIPATE, HOWEVER, THAT THE LOSER IN SUCH AN EVENT WILL BE KY. THE SENIOR GENERALS AT THE END OF JUNE DECIDED ON THE THIEU-KY TICKET AND ACCEPTED KY'S WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE. THEY HAD THE RIGHT TO EXPECT

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

-2- SAIGON 7349, OCTOBER 1 SECTION 2 OF 2

THAT THE TICKET WOULD HOLD TOGETHER AND ACHIEVE THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH IT WAS FORMED, VIZ. TO ASSURE A VICTORY OF THE MILITARY TICKET AT THE POLLS IN SEPTEMBER

PAGE 3 RUMJIR 7349/2 ~~SECRET~~

UNDER CONDITIONS THAT WOULD NOT BE FURTHER DISRUPTIVE OF THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT OR THE COUNTRY. KY'S COOPERATION THROUGHOUT THE CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC. IF NOW, WHEN HE HAS THE POWER TO PREVENT IT, HE LETS HIS FOLLOWERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC-ALLIANCE BLOC DESTROY THE ELECTION IN A POWER PLAY TO ADVANCE HIS SELFISH INTEREST, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THE GENERALS WILL HAVE LITTLE SYMPATHY WITH HIM.

10. THERE ARE OF COURSE OTHER ALTERNATIVE POSSIBILITIES IN ADDITION TO THE TWO DISCUSSED ABOVE. ONE IS SITUATION YOU MENTION IN PARAGRAPH 1 (B) OF YOUR MESSAGE WHEREBY THE ASSEMBLY AND THE DIRECTORATE WOULD UNDERTAKE IMMEDIATELY TO PREPARE FOR NEW ELECTIONS. THIS IS SOMETHING WE SHOULD AVOID. FOR REASONS SET FORTH ABOVE I THINK WE MUST DISCOURAGE ANY FURTHER INVOLVEMENT OF THE PRESENT ASSEMBLY IN ELECTIONS AND POSTPONE ALL SUCH QUESTIONS FOR RECONSIDERATION BY THE NEW ASSEMBLY.

11. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY IS THAT THE ASSEMBLY WILL FIND, UNDER ARTICLE 53 OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION LAW, THAT THERE WERE IRREGULARITIES IN ENOUGH POLLING STATIONS TO JUSTIFY NEW ELECTIONS AT THOSE STATIONS. IF SO, ARTICLE 54

PAGE 4 RUMJIR 7349/2 ~~SECRET~~

REQUIRES THAT SUCH NEW ELECTIONS MUST BE ORGANIZED WITHIN TWO WEEKS IN THE LOCALITIES CONCERNED "USING EXISTING ROLLS OF VOTERS AND THE SAME LISTS OF CANDIDATES." THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED WOULD BE CONSIDERABLE, RAISING QUESTIONS SUCH AS WHETHER THE GVN WOULD BE ABLE TO CONDUCT NEW ELECTIONS IN SUCH A SHORT TIME, WHETHER CANDIDATES SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO CAMPAIGN AGAIN IN SUCH LOCALITIES, AND WHETHER DZU SHOULD BE RELEASED FROM JAIL FOR THE OCCASION. SUCH A POSTPONEMENT AND RE-RUN OF ELECTIONS COULD BE DISRUPTIVE OF PUBLIC ORDER AND RESULT IN CONTINUED PROBLEMS OF OPPOSITION UNREST AND THREATENED VIOLENCE. PRESUMABLY, HOWEVER, IF THE ASSEMBLY SHOULD APPLY ARTICLE 53 AND ELECTIONS SHOULD BE RE-RUN IN CERTAIN LOCALITIES IT WOULD MEAN THAT ULTIMATE VALIDATION WOULD ONLY BE DELAYED AND WOULD NOT BE IN

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

-3- SAIGON 7349, OCTOBER 1 SECTION 2 OF 2

DOUBT. I DOUBT THAT THE ASSEMBLY WILL APPLY ARTICLE 53 BUT IT CANNOT BE RULED OUT. IN ANY EVENT, IF THE EVENTUALITY SHOULD ARISE, I BELIEVE GVN COULD HANDLE THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED AND WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE THEM TO SEE IT THROUGH.

PAGE 5 RUMJIR 7349/2 ~~SECRET~~

12. WITH RESPECT TO THE DANGERS OF CIVIL DISORDER, WITH VARIOUS OPPOSITIONIST ELEMENTS TRI QUANG, SUU, DZU AND STUDENT LEADERS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION TO STIR UP TROUBLE, MY FEELING IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT CAN CONTAIN THIS THREAT INITIALLY THROUGH NECESSARY POLICE MEASURES AND THAT SUBSEQUENTLY MUCH OF THE IMPACT OF ANY SUCH OPPOSITION EFFORTS WOULD BE DISSIPATED BY PROMPT GOVERNMENT ACTION SHOWING INTENT TO MOVE AHEAD WITH INSTALLATION OF THE ASSEMBLY AND ULTIMATELY TO HOLD NEW PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. SO FAR, THE DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE BEEN HANDLED WITH CONSIDERABLE SKILL AND A MINIMUM OF DISORDER. BOTH THIEU AND KY HAVE EXPRESSED TO ME THEIR CONFIDENCE THEY CAN HANDLE ANY UNREST THAT MIGHT DEVELOP.

13. I, TOO, SINCERELY HOPE ALL OF OUR CONCERNS WILL PROVE UNNECESSARY AND THAT THE FOREGOING WILL BE NOTHING MORE THAN AN INTERESTING EXERCISE IN SPECULATION. ALTHOUGH I WOULD STILL HESITATE TO PREDICT THE OUTCOME OF THE VOTE IN THE ASSEMBLY, VIETNAMESE POLITICS BEING WHAT THEY ARE, I DO HAVE THE FEELING THAT THE SITUATION IS BRIGHTER TODAY AND IN THE ABSENCE OF UNFORESEEN NEW DEVELOPMENTS THE CHANCES OF VALIDATION ARE FAIRLY GOOD.

GP-1

BUNKER

BT

~~SECRET~~

COPY LBJ LIBRARY