

Monday,
February 12, 1968

72
Pres file

CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Status of the Draft in South Viet-Nam

You asked for a status report on the draft in South Viet-Nam with particular reference to action by the Legislature.

The original Mobilization Decree was issued October 25, 1967. It was signed by Ky as Prime Minister.

It lowered the draft age from 20 to 18. It also provided for a recall of some veterans, mobilization of specialists and technicians and a tighter deferment policy.

When the new Assembly took office, there was criticism in both Houses of the previous Government's action. The criticism mainly focused on the legality of the Government's action before there was a legal legislature. There was no disagreement in either House as to the necessity of some kind of mobilization decree.

Minister of National Defense Vy appeared before both Houses on December 18, the Upper House in the morning had an open session, the Lower House had a closed session in the afternoon. He described the Decree and answered questions in both Houses. He announced the Government's intention to begin drafting 19 year olds on July 1, 1968 and 18 year olds on December 1, 1968.

Both Houses have since debated the mobilization question. The Upper House passed a resolution on December 28. It supported the need for mobilization measures. It asked the Executive to make the terms of its Decree more specific. It asked the drafting of 18 and 19 year olds be ~~postponed until~~ done only after the 20-33 year old manpower pool was exhausted.

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

White House Guidelines, Rev. 24, 1983
6/25/96

CONFIDENTIAL

On January 6, the Lower House adopted a similar resolution using most of the same words. It did state the intention of the Lower House to draft a new mobilization law but nothing has been done on that.

In effect, these were "sense of the House" resolutions and did not alter the legal provisions of the Decree. On February 7, President Thieu told Ambassador Bunker he intended to begin drafting 19 year olds on April 1 and 18 year olds on July 1.

On February 9, in his State of the Nation address, President Thieu announced his intention to "strictly enforce the Decree law on partial mobilization" and to "carry out immediately the military build-up plan ahead of schedule."

We have a report today that the Government has pushed its schedule further forward and plans to draft 19 year olds beginning March 1 and 18 year olds beginning May 1.

W. W. Rostow

CONFIDENTIAL

