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Civilian Provincial and District Officials Being Replaced by
Active Military Personnel in Gia Dinh and Cholon

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In my memorandum of August 4 transmitting names of provincial officials it was set forth that certain governmental changes were to be made in the Province of Gia Dinh and that developments along this line would be reported.

It has now been ascertained that the two Civilian Chiefs of Province for Gia Dinh and Cholon have been replaced by two active VN Army Colonels and that all the Civilian District Chiefs in both Gia Dinh and Cholon have been or will be replaced by active VN National Army Officers.

During my recent visit to the refugee camps in the District of Tan Binh in the Province of Gia Dinh I met Lt. Ho Van Hon who replaced the former Chief of District Mr. Nguyen Van Nghia.

During a later visit to other refugee camps in the District of Co Vap in the Province of Gia Dinh on August 6th, I was introduced to Capt. Le Minh also an active officer of the VN National Army who replaced Mr. Dean Van Binh, the former Civilian Chief of the Co Vap District.

Capt. Le Minh took the opportunity of my visit to the camps in his district to join me and make his first inspection of the camps in his area.

Capt. Le Minh displayed a keen interest in the development of the camps and welfare of the refugees. He explained later that the assignment of Active Military Officers to the Provincial and District Administrative functions in Gia Dinh and Cholon was a "consequence of the political circumstances". In substance he remarked that Gia Dinh and Cholon have been found vulnerable to rebel and communist infiltration and because of the strategic location of the two areas from a Military point of view it was found necessary to coordinate the administrative detail more closely with the military. He also added that it was necessary to combine the administration policy with the military authority so that energetic steps could be taken if and whenever necessary.

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Capt. Le Minh remarked during a short stop at his home, on our way back to Saigon that Civilian Administration was incapable of "bringing to the people a firm conviction of the National Policy because the people often found themselves unprotected". This fact he went on to add "has been revealed many times by the number of criminal deeds which have been perpetrated by subversive elements within the present government". While Capt. Le Minh did not accuse his predecessor he made it clear that none of the Civilian hold-overs in the government were above suspicion and therefore could not be trusted to support the Diem government.

Capt. Le Minh stated that, according to text books he has read the U. S. Army was called on from time to time to undertake such assignments and that the desired results were achieved as history now records. He concluded his remarks on this subject by stating in substance, that "this new policy of the VN government if faithfully applied would undoubtedly insure order and peace for his countrymen and instill in them a trust for the National government as well as its Army".

During the interview with the camp leaders the question of "security" arose. The camp priests earnestly requested fire protection for their camps (consisting of 9 camps grouped together with a refugee population of 20,138). Captain Le Minh stated in no uncertain terms that he guaranteed them military protection but would have to rely on the camp leaders to organize camp security squads to cope with the political aspect and also to watch for any effort, by hostile groups to infiltrate their camps. He offered to issue a limited amount of arms, to each camp if the Priest could show the need and vouch for the reliability of the recipients.

Mr. Le Minh also expressed his sincere thanks on behalf of his government for all the valuable assistance of all kinds which has been given to his people and government.

Capt. Le Minh spoke in optimistic and forceful terms as he warmed-up to his subject and gave every indication of his sincere devotion to the cause and policies of his government. He impressed me as an able leader and capable of performing his assignment.

JDE/Vml.

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