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Presidential Order Changes Status of Refugees at Saigon

FIELD REPORT NO. FS - 1492

On the 19th of August the President of Vietnam issued an order which was brought to Saigon by Mr. Trinh Van Thuan, Secretary to the Minister of Agrarian Reform. Mr. Thuan arrived in Saigon at ten o'clock on the morning of the 20th of August and a meeting was called which included some of the officials at Saigon, the Chief of District of Tan Hiep and the Chiefs of Province of both Long Myon and Rach Gia.

The contents of the President's order were kept secret and the meeting was closed to all outside persons. Some information was picked up, however, from remarks made by various officials who were standing around waiting for the arrival of the Chiefs of Province of Long Myon and Rach Gia.

The President's order seemed to be very brief. It directed that the refugees were no longer to be considered refugees but were to be ordinary citizens with no special considerations. It was further directed that the priests in the villages were to have no administrative functions and were to be considered only as spiritual leaders. Finally it was directed that the villages be organized with a village chief and a council as other villages are organized in South Vietnam. The changeover was to be carried out within 48 hours of the receipt of the order. Only the refugees at Saigon are affected as the document is directed only to them. The meeting was called at about eleven o'clock at Saigon to determine the procedure of enforcement of the President's directive.

Several opinions were expressed by various individuals as to the reasons for this rather drastic action.

The refugees have been increasingly troublesome and arrogant. There has been trouble between local people and refugees about land which resulted in violence. There has been serious land trouble on Canal 4 (previously reported in FS-1452, August 19) and at the far end of Canal 7 where about 3,000 meters of land belonging to locals has been taken by refugees.

The refugees along the Rach Sei Canal have been repeatedly ordered to move but they have refused, even though their supplies and allowances have been cut off. The refugees have been complaining about the ploughing which is not being done to their liking in certain areas. On the 18th of August there was a

demonstration by refugees...

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... by refugees along Canal A. The refugees... that... be...  
... claim that that area is so muddy that...  
... Chief of District at Tan Hiep...  
... attempted to quiet the...  
... were challenged by the...  
... Mrs. Hu is the...  
... both Mr. and...  
... she is alleged to have...  
... with the help of certain...

... references to Mrs. Hu by the refugees,  
... be interested, were remarked by the...  
... that new arrivals in the villages have...  
... until quite recently was...  
... seemed to be well...  
... on the eve of a communist...  
... there is a strong communist...  
... in the Cuban Project.

- Mr. [Name]
- Mr. [Name]
- Mr. [Name]
- Mr. [Name]

BAI/yon

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