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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
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30 August 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Probable Loyalties of Vietnamese Units
and Commanders.

The enclosure offers, in tabular form, a presentation of the probable loyalties of key military units and commanders in the event a coup d'etat is undertaken in South Vietnam in the near future. With the exception of information on the Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps, which originated in the Joint Staff, the summary is based upon a Central Intelligence Agency report received from Saigon on 29 August.

Maxwell D. Taylor
MAXWELL D. TAYLOR
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

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UNITS IN THE IMMEDIATE SAIGON AREA

UNIT	STRENGTH	EQUIPMENT	APPRAISAL OF LOYALTY
Presidential Guard	2,500	15 WWII Tanks 12 Armored Personnel Carriers At least 1,000 Automatic Rifles	Most likely will remain loyal to DIEM. This is an elite unit and presidential favorite. Leader, LtCol <u>HIEU</u> is strong, and most likely to remain with DIEM under any circumstances. The equipment is well adapted to urban fighting.
Armor Branch	4,296	21 WWII Tanks 41 Armored Personnel Carriers 14 Armored Cars	Loyalty to DIEM highly questionable. Many dissidents in this branch, whose units are assigned to many other organizations. Commander, Col <u>THIEN</u> , has no operational command, but has impressive following among unit commanders. The equipment is well adapted to urban fighting.
Airborne Brigade	2,550	Conventional infantry equipment including counter-armor weapons such as bazookas and recoilless rifles.	Could likely be led to act against DIEM in case of a coup, either under present leader, Col <u>VIEN</u> , or one of the many other dissident officers in brigade. VIEN has claimed to be loyal to DIEM, but could probably be pushed aside by another in case he should try to remain loyal. This brigade has a history of coup plots and attempts.
Marine Brigade	1,500	Conventional infantry plus artillery and mortars. no	Unknown. Brigade will probably follow the commander, LtCol <u>KHANG</u> who is strong, respected by his subordinates and competent. In past KHANG has been steadfast and loyal to DIEM, however recent reports indicate he is dissatisfied, upset and perhaps ready to take part in a coup.
Special Forces (plus additional units)	1,840	Conventional light infantry.	Probably will stand by DIEM. All through current unrest these units have been active in Saigon in physical action against Buddhists. These forces are under command of Col <u>TUNG</u> , who is judged to be absolutely loyal to DIEM. His units will most probably follow him.
Vietnamese Air Force	2,812	63 Light bombers 17 Helicopters 38 C-47 Transports	Likely ready to join non-Communist coup group. Unit has history of disaffection. Present commander, Col <u>HEM</u> is a weak leader, but in past has been strongly sympathetic to DIEM and NRU. Many officers in the Air Force are capable, and are ready to take over command.
Vietnamese Navy	2,200	Light infantry; river boats with machine guns; patrol craft with 20 and 40 mm cannons.	Likely to remain loyal to DIEM. Can probably be held together by present command, Capt <u>GUYEN</u> , who in two coup crises in the past, has sided with DIEM immediately and emphatically.
QUANG TRUNG Training Center	Highly variable - estimated 2,000 poorly disciplined trainees.	All light infantry weapons.	Significance is large quantity of weapons and proximity to Saigon (3 miles). Commander, LtCol <u>XUAN</u> is a dissident, a Buddhist, and close to Gen <u>CHIEU</u> who is reportedly anti-regime.
THU Duc Reserve Officers School	Highly variable - estimated 400.	Rifles and handguns.	Students may be ready for a coup, but their capability open to some question. Many are discontented for various reasons. Commander, Col <u>SON</u> , is exceptionally competent officer who was once not trusted by regime, but has been wooed recently. His present inclinations are unknown, but SON has the courage and ability to make him an important figure on whichever side he chooses.

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UNIT	STRENGTH	EQUIPMENT	APPRAISAL OF LOYALTY
Saigon Uniformed Police	4,500	Hand guns, light automatic weapons.	<u>Unknown</u> , however, leaders are customarily responsive to direct orders from Palace.
Civil Guard	780	Rifles, light automatic weapons.	<u>Unknown</u> .
<p>-----</p> <p>In addition to the above forces, there are regular Army units, more remote from Saigon, but which might be brought into the conflict.</p>			
III Corps	8,608 (all believed to be within 50 miles of Saigon.)	Conventional infantry including 105 mm Howitzers.	<u>Unknown</u> . Not predictable which units might follow the present leader. Actions of leader himself, BGen DIEM, not possible to predict. Normally his opportunism might lead one to expect him to leap to winning side, but he has recently become identified with regime. Next most influential officer in Division is Col THIEN who is Catholic and known as strong supporter of NHU.
IV Corps	17,505 (estimated 8,850 within 50 miles of Saigon).	Conventional infantry including 105 mm Howitzers.	<u>Unit itself unknown</u> , but commander BGen CAO idolizes DIEM and has sworn to devote his life to supporting him. CAO is considered completely loyal to DIEM. However, there is reason to question CAO's ability to command loyalty of subordinate units. Both his Deputy and his Chief of Staff are reported disaffected. BGen KHIEM reportedly commands loyalty of several of the more influential officers in 7th Division, near Saigon. KHIEM is reported to be strongly anti-NHU, in spite of the fact that he is now serving as Chief of Staff of Joint General Staff.

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