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INFORMATION REPORT

information affecting the National Defense of the
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COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

REPORT NO. TDCS DB-3/656,842

SUBJECT

1. NGO DINH NHU INTENTION TO DEAL WITH VC

DATE DISTR.

24 SEPTEMBER 1963

2. ATTEMPTS OF PHAM NGOC THAO TO ARRANGE THE
AIR FORCE SUPPORT FOR A COUP D'ETAT

PRECEDENCE

ROUTINE

DATE OF

9-20 SEPTEMBER 1963

REFERENCES

IN 26062

INFO

VIETNAM, SAIGON (22 SEPTEMBER 1963)

PLACE &

DATE ACQ.

APPRAISAL SEE BELOW

FIELD REPORT NO. FVS 9684

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION. SOURCE GRADINGS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

SOURCE

A FIELD GRADE VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE OFFICER (F).

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED THAT HE HAD BEEN "CONSIDERING DEALING WITH

APPR: IT IS PROBABLY TRUE THAT THAO HAS PLANNED A COUP AND HAS SOUGHT VNAF

SUPPORT AS REPORTED. THE SUBSTANCE OF THAO'S TALKS WITH DIEM AND NHU CONCERNING
NHU'S CONTACTS WITH THE VIET CONG AND NHU'S PLANS FOR MAJOR CHANGES IN THE SOUTH

VIETNAMESE ECONOMY CANNOT BE ACCURATELY JUDGED. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT NHU WOULD
MAKE A DEAL WITH THE COMMUNISTS ALTHOUGH THAO IS APPARENTLY CONVINCED THAT NHU

IS CONSIDERING SUCH ACTION. IT IS NOT TRUE THAT AMBASSADOR LODGE TALKED WITH THAO

SUMMARY. ON 20 SEPTEMBER 1963 LIEUTENANT COLONEL PHAM NGOC

THAO, ASSIGNED TO THE PRESIDENCY AS AN INSPECTOR FOR THE STRATEGIC

HAMLET PROGRAM, SAID THAT HE HAD TALKED SEPARATELY WITH PRESIDENT

DIEM AND NGO DINH NHU ABOUT NHU'S CONTACTS WITH THE VIET CONG (VC)

AND THAT NHU HAD ADMITTED THAT HE WAS "CONSIDERING DEALING WITH

THE COMMUNISTS." THAO CLAIMED THAT NHU WAS PLANNING MAJOR

CHANGES TO MAKE THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ECONOMY MORE SIMILAR TO

THE ECONOMIES OF COMMUNIST NATIONS. THAO HAS SOLICITED VIETNAMESE

AIR FORCE (VNAF) SUPPORT FOR A COUP D'ETAT AGAINST THE DIEM REGIME.

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THAO SAID THAT NHU'S PLANS TO DEAL WITH THE COMMUNISTS MUST BE FORESTALLED.

2. THAO SAID THAT DURING THE WEEK 9-15 SEPTEMBER PRESIDENT DIEM SUMMONED HIM AND ASKED HIM HOW HE, DIEM, WAS REGARDED BY THE PEOPLE. THAO REPLIED THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS STILL PERSONALLY POPULAR BUT THAT THE PEOPLE DISLIKED NHU BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED THAT NHU WAS IN CONTACT WITH THE VC. THAO SAID THAT DIEM WAS ANGERED AND DEMANDED TO KNOW WHO HAD TOLD THAO THIS INFORMATION. THAO REPLIED THAT THIS OPINION WAS COMMONLY HELD BY CIVIL SERVANTS, THE GENERAL PUBLIC, AND THE AMERICANS.

3. ON 16 SEPTEMBER NHU SUMMONED THAO AND ASKED HIM WHY HE HAD TOLD THE PRESIDENT OF NHU'S CONTACTS WITH THE VC. THAO BELIEVED THAT NHU HIMSELF HAD TOLD AMERICAN AMBASSADOR LODGE AND THAT LODGE HAD SUBSEQUENTLY INFORMED THAO. NHU CALMED DOWN AND LATER IN THE CASHING INTERVIEW ADMITTED THAT HE HAD BEEN "CONSIDERING DEALING WITH THE COMMUNISTS." THAO CLAIMED THAT HE TOLD NHU THAT NHU DID NOT

UNDERSTAND THE COMMUNISTS AND THAT HE WOULD BE PLAYING A DANGEROUS GAME IN DEALING WITH THEM. (FIELD COMMENT. AMBASSADOR LODGE HAS NEVER MET THAO.)

4. THAO SAID THAT NHU PLANNED TO MAKE MAJOR CHANGES DURING THE COMING MONTHS, INCLUDING THE NATIONALIZATION OF BANKS AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISES, WHICH THAO SAID, WOULD MAKE SOUTH VIETNAM'S ECONOMY MORE SIMILAR TO ECONOMIES OF COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. (FIELD

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COMMENT. THAO DID NOT STATE THE SOURCE OF HIS INFORMATION CONCERNING NHU'S PLANS.) ACCORDING TO THAO, NHU'S CONTACT WITH THE COMMUNISTS WAS VIA THE POLISH DELEGATION TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONTROL COMMISSION. THAO SAID THAT NHU'S PLAN TO DEAL WITH THE COMMUNISTS MUST BE FORESTALLED.

5. ON 20 SEPTEMBER 1963 THAO SPOKE TO A RANKING VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE (VNAF) OFFICER CONCERNING THE POSSIBILITY OF THE VNAF SUPPORTING A COUP D'ETAT AGAINST THE DIEM REGIME. THAO SAID THAT:

A. THE VNAF WOULD NOT BE INVOLVED IN ANY FIGHTING BECAUSE RESISTANCE BY GOVERNMENT FORCES WOULD BE OVERCOME IN THREE HOURS.

B. THE COUP LEADERS WANTED THE VNAF TO HINDER OR STOP THE FORCES OF BRIGADIER GENERAL HUYNH VAN CAO, IV CORPS COMMANDER FROM ASSISTING FORCES LOYAL TO THE DIEM REGIME.

6. THAO WANTED VNAF SUPPORT TO STOP CAO ALTHOUGH HE BELIEVED THAT CAO MIGHT NOT NOW SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT AS STRONGLY AS IN THE PAST. HE GAVE THE FOLLOWING REASONS FOR THIS JUDGEMENT:

A. CAO DID NOT ESTABLISH MARTIAL LAW IN THE IV CORPS AFTER THE PROCLAMATION ESTABLISHING MARTIAL LAW IN THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY ON 21 AUGUST.

B. RECENTLY, CAO HAS KEPT HIS TROOPS HEAVILY COMMITTED IN OPERATIONS AGAINST THE VC.

C. CAO APPEARED TO BE REMAINING ALOOF FROM EVENTS IN SAIGON.

D. CAO HAS MADE REPEATED REQUESTS TO THAO TO VISIT HIM AND

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HAS OFFERED HIS PRIVATE AIRCRAFT TO THAO FOR SUCH A VISIT.

7. THE VNAF OFFICER WHOM THAO APPROACHED REPLIED THAT COLONEL HUYNH HUU HIEN, VNAF COMMANDER, WAS COMPLETELY LOYAL TO THE REGIME AND, PARTICULARLY, TO NGO DINH NHU. HE ALSO TOLD THAO THAT IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WHAT ACTION VNAF OFFICERS WOULD TAKE IN THE EVENT OF A COUP. THAO REPLIED THAT IF HIEN FAILED TO COOPERATE, HE COULD EASILY BE KILLED.

8. FIELD DISSEM. STATE (AMBASSADOR LODGE) USMACV (GENERAL HARKINS) CINCPAC PACFLT ARPAC PACAF.

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END OF MESSAGE

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