

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
28 August 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Cast of Characters in South Vietnam

Decision - Layman Robert Casale
Subin. Ben
not to evacuate

agreed by Ruth Bell Henneman

qwb
Nhus in control intolerable.
"Terrible damage"

12/27/63
Are you going to back the
- borderline piece
- Diem

Nothing - a bad principle and a
bad precedent.

Has to make the thing work.

(let it go as it is)

Three alternatives

qwb
Promises broken by
them

To make it work.

Worst thing we can do is learn it that way.

Principle of Action: we should never encourage this and then let it

~~SECRET~~

9a

CAST OF CHARACTERS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

Civilian Officials, Advisers, Security Heads

Ngo Dinh DIEM President and Secretary of National Defense

Ngo Dinh NHU Political Counselor to the President, Head of the Strategic Hamlet Program, Supreme Leader of the Republican Youth Movement. The President's brother and key thinker. Heads the semi-clandestine Can Lao party.

Mme. Ngo Dinh NHU Nhu's wife, official hostess for the President, head of the Women's Solidarity Movement and Women's Paramilitary Youth Movement. Daughter of ex-Ambassador to US Tran Van CHUONG.

Ngo Dinh CAN Brother of the President and boss of central Vietnam from Hue. Always a rival of Nhu, said to be on the decline since the crackdown.

Truong Cong CUU Newly appointed Foreign Minister, also Coordinating Secretary of State for Social and Cultural Affairs. Former National Assembly President; apparently a loyal pro-regime, Can Lao member; possibly able, but chiefly political appointee.

Vo Van HAI Diem's personal secretary. Probably loyal to Diem, but voiced extreme concern over events of 20 August which he blamed on Nhu.

Nguyen Van HAY Special Police Assistant at Directorate General of National Police. Considered loyal to Diem regime.

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4
NLK-76167 (IA MFD 6/76)
By mmb NARA Date 9/1/94

~~SECRET~~

- Duong Van HIEU

Chief of Special Police Bureau, Directorate General of National Police. Appointed early 1963 by Nhu and considered Nhu's man. Reported arrogant.
- Ngo Trong HIEU

Civic Action Minister. Activist and apparently loyal to Ngos. Served as Nhu's man in Cambodia for anti-Sihanouk plotting.
- Dang Duc KHOI

Able head of Press Service in Ministry of Information. Has been reported close to Tuyen and at times disaffected but appears to serve regime loyally. Was assigned by Nhu personally to assist Gen. Oai in press censorship function under martial law.
- Bui Van LUONG

Interior Minister. Considered Nhu's man.
- Ngo Dinh LUYEN

Diem's youngest brother, ambassador to UK and other European capitals.
- Vu Van MAU

Foreign Minister who resigned on 22 August. Buddhist who now seems have considerable popular sympathy. Possibly under arrest although this is denied.
- Nguyen Ngoc THO

Vice President. Buddhist. Generally kept on the outside by the Ngos, but headed Interministerial Committee for negotiating with Buddhists. Generally considered weak leader but not permitted key role.
- Nguyen Dinh THUAN

Presidential secretary and Assistant Minister of Defense, also defense coordinator. Close to Ngo family and key contact man with US officials. Appears shaken by recent events, but still emotionally if not rationally committed to Ngos.

Ngo Dinh THUC

Diem's brother, Archbishop of Hué. Considered influential with Diem and now more so than Can.

Tran Kim Tuyen

Former head of presidential security service (SEPES), GVN's intelligence and dirty tricks outfit. Long considered extremely close to Ngos, especially Nhu, and possibly still is. Concerned in anti-Sihanouk ops. Recently reported in disfavor and removed from SEPES, but said to be a political adviser to presidency. Reported coup-plotting since early July, possibly in earnest or to provide a smokescreen.

Cao Xuan VY

Director of Youth and Sports. Loyal to Nhu.

Col. Nguyen Van Y

Director General of National Police and Commissioner of the Central Intelligence Organization. Believed disliked by the regime as too close to US and not a Ngo man. Recently has been under some veiled attack from within regime as alleged contact of VC.

~~SECRET~~

Military

Brig. Gen. Huynh Van CAO	Commander IV Corps south of Saigon. Considered loyal to regime, regarded generally as able commander. Catholic, US C&GS trained.
Brig. Gen. Van Thanh CAO	Political general, not to be confused with IV Corps commander. Is Govt. Delegate for Southeast Provinces, identified as Nhu follower in past.
Brig. Gen. Pham Xuan CHIEU	Also appointed as assistant to Gen. Don for martial law after being on shelf in capacity of Inspector in Strategic Hamlet Program. Buddhist. Was CoS to JGS until '60 coup attempt, removed for suspected sympathies with rebels, although played no role. Was in US for C&GS until recently.
Lt. Col. Bui Dinh DAM	Cdr., 7th Inf. Div, My Tho (IV Corps) about 40 miles southwest of Saigon. Said to be close to some GVN officials and "Little Minh" but not known to be Nhu man.
Brig. Gen. Ton That DINH	Commander III Corps (north of Saigon) and military governor of Saigon. Nominal Catholic (apparently rice-bowl convert). Aggressive, arrogant officer, reported by some to be effective commander. Never known as strong critic of regime, but probably basic opportunist who was among key officers in plan to bring about martial law.
Maj. Gen. Tan Van DON	Now Acting Chief, Joint General Staff, ARVN, and supreme commander of military government under martial law. Also Army Commander. Buddhist. Don may be out of his

~~SECRET~~

depth in current role, but appears to have been one of key officers through whom military rule brought about on 20 August. Real loyalty uncertain and probably opportunist. Seems to be in all camps: reported close to French, to Nhu, impressive to many Americans, and close to chief military critics of GVN, but not fully trusted by them. Claims not informed about raid plans.

Col. Huynh Huu HIEN

Commander, Air Force. Buddhist. Hien was once Diem's personal pilot and considered loyal, but appeared somewhat shaken by GVN's early handling of Buddhist crisis. Considerable disaffection reported in air force.

Maj. Gen. Thai Quang
HOANG

Commander, Command and General Staff School. Out of favor as possible pro-'60 rebel since he was captured by the paratroops.

Lt. Col. Nguyen Ngoc
KHOI

Commander, Presidential Guard Brigade, Saigon, (est. strength 2,500). Picked for loyalty, although once rumored possibly disaffected along with some of his troops.

Brig. Gen. Nguyen KHANH

Commander, II Corps, north-central South Vietnam. Good aggressive troop commander. Buddhist. Apparently uninvolved in events leading to martial law. From Nov '60 to late '61 was Chief of Staff, JGS, a job given as a reward for helping rescue Diem in 1960. Reported disaffected during JGS tenure.

Lt. Col. Le Nguyen KHANG

Commander, Marines (subordinate to navy). Recently given award by GVN. Marines loyal in past, but recently reportedly some disaffection and Khang in late '61 claimed ARVN being hamstrung by politics.

94

~~SECRET~~

Brig Gen. Tran Thien
KHIEM

Chief of Staff to the JGS, ARVN. Buddhist. Current loyalties uncertain. Apparently one of few generals with advance knowledge of martial law plan, although probably unwitting about pagoda raid plans. One of key generals rescuing Diem in 1960 coup attempt, to which he owes his current job; also, however, reported disaffected since present appointment (late 1961). One of younger officers.

Brig Gen. Le Van KIM

Now serving as a martial law deputy to Gen. Don, who is his brother-in-law. Has been Inspector in Strategic Hamlet Program. Buddhist, close to "Big Minh." Considered one of SVN's most capable military officers, but long put on shelf because he is known critic of regime. One of those who has claimed army was "duped."

Brig Gen. Nguyen Van LA

CG, Saigon-Cholon Zone; now under Gen. Dinh. Believed loyal to regime. Ex-police chief, unfriendly to US.

Col. Duong Ngoc LAM

Commander of Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps. Buddhist.

Brig. Gen. Nguyen Ngoc
LE

Appointed deputy to Gen. Don for martial law, reported in charge of Veterans' Affairs until appointed by Nhu to role in Strategic Hamlet Program this summer. Reported pro-French.

Lt. Col. Do Khac MAI

Chief of Staff, Air Force. Recently given citation by GVN, probably to win loyalty. However, has been privately extremely critical of regime during entire Buddhist crisis.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Col. Do MAU	Director of Military Security Service, Defense Ministry. Probably loyal to regime. Was in some disfavor for allowing himself to be captured by rebels in 1960.
Col. Nguyen Van MAU	Director Military Justice, Gendarmerie, Ministry Defense.
Maj. Gen. Duong Van MINH	Military adviser to President. (Paper job only). Known as "Big Minh", is considered popular and capable officer who has frequently been critical of the regime. Has not been fully trusted by regime and has no command responsibility. Buddhist.
Maj. Gen. Tran Van MINH	Permanent Secretary General for National Defense. Known as "Little Minh." Close to "Big Minh" but loyalty to regime unknown. Respected but not highly dynamic general.
Brig. Gen. Le Van NGHIEM	Nominally in command of I Corps (northern SVN), but not effectively so. Buddhist, strongly disaffected in Buddhist crisis and probably actually on shelf. Probably not dynamic.
Col. Bui Huu NHON	Cdr, 21st Inf. Div at Can Tho, about 75 miles south of Saigon.
Capt. Nguyen Quang NGUYEN	Dep. Chief of Opns, Armor Command, who stated mid-July that command would not defend regime against a coup.
Brig. Gen. Tran Tu OAI	Director of Psychological Warfare, Ministry Defense. Initially appointed military censor under martial law and claims to have been one of few generals aware of the martial law plan in advance. Catholic and believed to be close to Nhu and Diem.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

- Lt. Col. Nguyen Huu PHUOC Said to head Republican Youth Mvt in Saigon, but has been reported disaffected and replaced from a command at the palace.
- Lt. Col. Nguyen Van PHUOC Chief of Intelligence (J-2), ARVN.
- Capt. Ho Tan QUYEN Commander, Vietnamese Navy. Buddhist. Loyal in past to regime. One source claimed some disaffection in navy in July '63, but no past history of this.
- Brig. Gen. Tran Ngoc TAM Inspector in Strategic Hamlet Program, reported in past as close to Nhu.
- Lt. Col. Pham Ngoc THAO Assigned to Strategic Hamlet Program. Was chief of Kien Hoa Province but apparently reassigned as he began to be public figure in his own right. Said to be aggressive and dynamic, recently reported coup plotting in two camps. Was ex-Viet Minh (with a brother an official in DRV) but is not known to be pro-Viet Cong as alleged by some of his enemies.
- Lt. Col. Nguyen Van THIEN Chief, Armor Command (Armored Brigade). Loyalty unknown. He was awarded an honor by GVN in July. Considerable disaffection among armored troops was reported by Dep CoS for Opns in mid-July.
- Col. Nguyen Van THIEU Commander, 5th Inf. Div, Bien Hoa about 20 miles north of Saigon in III Corps. Reported to be Catholic and close to Nhu.
- Brig. Gen. Do Cao TRI Commander of 1st Division in I Corps and military governor in Hue. Also defacto commander of I Corps. Young, dynamic and capable, believed

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

to be Catholic. Appears extremely ambitious; recently promoted from Colonel.

Col. Le Quang TUNG

Commander, Special Forces. Catholic loyal to Nhu. Reported generally disliked by most of army. Once alleged to be number-three man in GVN after Diem and Nhu.

Lt. Gen. Ly Van TY

Chief of Joint General staff of Vietnamese Armed Forces (ARVN), elderly and largely figurehead, currently in US for medical treatment. Buddhist.

Col. Cao Van VIEN

Commander, Airborne Brigade. (6 bns, 1 mortar bty). Appointed to post after paratroops attempted coup in '60 and deemed personally loyal to regime. Reported, however, to have indicated some sympathy recently with student demonstrators he was trying to discipline. Considerable disaffection alleged among paratroops.

Brig. Gen. Mai Huu XUAN

Commanding Officer, Quang Trung Mil Training Center north of Saigon. Buddhist. Has been reported close to Gen. Don.

Col. Nguyen Van Y

Director General National Police and Commissioner of Central Intelligence Organization.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~Political Figures Outside Government1. Buddhists

- (Rev.) Thich Tinh KHIET Supreme High Priest in General Association of Vietnamese Buddhists (GAVB). From Hué. National leader, but in his 80's. Prisoner of GVN and reported ill in hospital.
- Thich Tinh MINH Also from central Vietnam and leader in Hué. Identified with militant clergy. Reported arrested.
- Thich Tri QUANG Militant head of clergy in central Vietnam (Hué) who was instrumental in initial 8 May incident and increasingly prominent in direction of Buddhist campaign, possibly with some political motivation. Young and politically aware, but reported tubercular. Apparently eluded GVN capture.
- Mai Tho TRUYEN Head of lay organization of GAVB (Buddhist Studies Association) at Xa Loi Pagoda, Saigon. Official of World Fellowship of Buddhists. Believed to be moderate and respected leader. Relations with GVN in past not known, but not considered close to regime. Apparently played relatively minor role in Buddhist campaign after initial stages, but this uncertain.

2. Other Oppositionists, or Persons Outside Government

- Tran Quoc BUU President of General Confederation of Labor. Considered one of ablest Vietnamese leaders, intelligent and runs the only effective labor union. Can Lao member who has stayed on good terms with Nhu, but has frequently expressed criticism of the Diem regime and of Nhu.

~~SECRET~~

Bui DIEM

Dai Viet member, purported force behind Dan Van Sung, has claimed to have ties with Buddhist Tri Quang.

Pham Huy CO

An exile in Paris since 1954 and once the representative abroad of oppositionist Dr. Pham Quang Dan. Has now proclaimed his own "Revolutionary Council" dedicated to regime's overthrow and claims support inside SVN where some leaflets apparently were work of his followers. A physician who has frequently sought US backing, believed relatively capable but not forceful and somewhat arrogant.

Pham Quang DAN

Physician, now imprisoned for active endorsement of '60 coup attempt which he attempted to take lead in after it began but was not in on plot. Known as head of opposition parties and as elected assemblyman not permitted to take his seat in 1959. One of better known public opposition figures, but another with arrogant and probably Mandarin-type tendencies.

Tran Van DO

Brother of recent Ambassador to US Chuong and uncle of Mme. Nhu. Was Diem's first Foreign Minister, but broke with regime in 1955 and formed largely discussion-type opposition group. Signed Caravelle petition and has variously been briefly arrested by GVN but exonerated in recent July trials. Respected opposition figure but not considered activist.

Lt. Col. Vuong Van DONG

Leader of paratroop coup in 1960 and exile in Cambodia until recently went to Paris; may now reside in Geneva. Politically somewhat naive, and recently joining forces with Co and Tran Van Huu, who pushes a neutralist line.

~~SECRET~~

Tran Trung DUNG

Diem's Defense Minister until mid-1961 but a casualty of the '60 coup aftermath. Has long record of anti-French, nationalist activity, one-time Can Lao member backing Diem, but now on outs. Reported to be intelligent, able, and a figure of some prestige.

Nguyen Ton HOAN

Paris exile and leader of southern faction of Dai Viet who has frequently drummed for US support. Once served in Bao Dai cabinet, but became early disaffected. Believed to be fairly capable and to enjoy some support in SVN, but no organized backing on the scale claimed.

Tran Van HUU

Enjoys some following among Paris exiles as a former Prime Minister of Bao Dai's. However, is now playing footsy with several exiles believed to be working with DRV and is openly advocating neutralist solution.

Huynh Van LANG

Former close ties with regime as Can Lao finance chief and Head Foreign Exchange. Fired by Nhu after agitating against Cabinet Ministers. Luong and Thuan in lottery scandal. Now reported coup-plotting against crack-down on Buddhists with alleged ties in academic circles.

Phan Huy QUAT

Dai Viet (northern faction) and founder of Front for National Unity, opposition movement permitted to organize under GVN's eye (and control) in 1961 as attempt to indicate reforms in wake of '60 coup. Quat was signer of Caravelle petition and considered relatively moderate oppositionist who appears reasonably capable, also self-seeking, but probably not too dynamic.

~~SECRET~~

Dan Van SUNG

Dai Viet leader who also organized an opposition movement, the Front for Democratization, in the wake of the '60 coup. Movement has not been active and appears have little real organized following. Physician.

Pham Khac SUU

Diem's first Agriculture Minister who soon split with the regime. Was only important oppositionist allowed to sit in National Assembly, but was imprisoned in wake of 1960 coup and still detained (sentence heaviest given civilian in SVN this July--8 years) although he apparently was totally uninvolved. Was a key figure behind Caravelle petition but did not sign. One of best-known opposition figures.

Hoang Co THUY

Now in exile in Switzerland where he fled after playing role of leading civilian adviser to paratroop coup group. Thuy was prominent Saigon oppositionist and lawyer for many oppositionists in trouble with Diem regime. Also was instrumental in many efforts to forge unified opposition movements. Not now reported politically active.