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TELEGRAM INFORMATION REPORT TELEGRAM

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COUNTRY	SOUTH VIETNAM	REPORT NO.	TDCS -3/529,470
SUBJECT	PROGRESS OF FREE ELECTIONS IN STRATEGIC HAMLETS	DATE DISTR.	26 NOVEMBER 1962
DATE OF INFO.	LATE NOVEMBER 1962	PRECEDENCE	ROUTINE
PLACE & DATE ACQ.	VIETNAM, SAIGON (24 NOVEMBER 1962)	REFERENCES	IN 24323
APPRAISAL	3	FIELD REPORT NO.	FVS-8217

FILE

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

SOURCE

1. DO CAO MINH, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, CONJECTURED IN LATE NOVEMBER 1962 THAT THE MOST SIGNIFICANT LONG TERM ASPECT OF THE STRATEGIC HAMLET PROGRAM MAY WELL BE THE CONCEPT OF FREE ELECTIONS AT THE HAMLET LEVEL, AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE ELECTED ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEES AND ADVISORY COUNCILS INTO THE FIRST ORGANIZED ADMINISTRATIVE ENTITIES BELOW THE VILLAGE LEVEL. THE PROGRAM IN EACH AREA WILL BE ADVANCED OR RETARDED ACCORDING TO THE ABILITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL CIVIC ACTION PERSONNEL SENT INTO THE HAMLETS TO ORGANIZE INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING ELECTIONS. MUCH ALSO WILL DEPEND ON THE ABILITY OF THE PROVINCE AND DISTRICT CHIEFS TO ADAPT THEIR THINKING TO THE NEW CONCEPTS. THUS, WITH

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DEARTH OF HIGHLY CAPABLE ADMINISTRATORS FREE FROM TRADITIONAL AUTOCRATIC PROCEDURES, THE PROBLEM WILL BE ONE OF TRAINING AND INDOCTRINATION. MINH, WHO HAD THE TASK OF SPONSORING THE ORIGINAL STRATEGIC HAMLET PROGRAM IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, AND HAS BEEN CAREFULLY FOLLOWING ITS SEVERAL NECESSARY MODIFICATIONS, STATED THAT HE WAS NOT YET SURE WHETHER THE STRATEGIC HAMLET TRAINING SCHOOL AT THI NGHE WAS GETTING ACROSS TO THE STUDENT ADMINISTRATORS THE FULL SCOPE AND INTENT OF THE PROGRAM. FOR THIS REASON, HE PLANNED TO ATTEND THE NEXT COURSE AT THI NGHE 2-15 DECEMBER AND, INSOFAR AS HIS POSITION ALLOWS, TO PARTICIPATE AS AN ORDINARY STUDENT.

2. AS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN STRATEGIC HAMLETS, MINH CANDIDLY ADMITTED THAT RESULTS HAVE BEEN UNEVEN. IN SOME AREAS ELECTIONS HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE DESIRED SPIRIT OF FREEDOM, WHEREAS IN OTHER AREAS ADMINISTRATORS HAVE BEEN OVER-ZEALOUS IN EXERTING CONTROL EVEN AFTER COMPLETION OF THE SECURITY SCREENING PROCESS. WHILE THEIR INSTRUCTIONS REQUIRE A CLEAR CHOICE BY SECRET BALLOT BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES ON AT LEAST TWO SLATES, THEIR ARBITRARY ACTIONS HAVE IN SOME INSTANCES VITIATED THE SPIRIT OF EDUCATING THE PEOPLE ON THE PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FREE ELECTIONS.

3. ELECTIONS OF ANY TYPE HAVE BEEN HELD IN ONLY ABOUT 600,

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AND NOT MORE THAN 700, OF THE APPROXIMATELY 1800 STRATEGIC HAMLETS THAT MAY ACTUALLY BE CONSIDERED AS COMPLETED, I.E., WHERE PERIMETER DEFENSES HAVE BEEN CONSTRUCTED AND WHERE BASIC ORGANIZATIONAL TASKS HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. (FIELD COMMENT: THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR REPORTED 2872 STRATEGIC HAMLETS COMPLETED BY 30 AUGUST 1962, WHICH IS OVER 1000 MORE THAN THE FIGURE GIVEN BY MINH. ON THE WHOLE, PROGRESS, ALBEIT SLOW, HAS BEEN GOOD, CONSIDERING THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED. ONCE A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF GOOD EXAMPLES EXIST, THE PROGRAM SHOULD GATHER MOMENTUM.)

4. FIELD DISSEM. STATE ARMY NAVY AIR USMACV MAAG USOM
CINCPAC PACFLT ARPAC PACAF 9TH FIELD STATION 2ND AIR DIV USIS.

END OF MESSAGE

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