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SECRET INFORMATION REPORT TELEGRAM

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY	SOUTH VIETNAM	REPORT NO.	TDCS DB-3/656,792
SUBJECT	PHAM NGOC THAO'S COUP GROUP'S STRATEGY; HIS OPINION OF THE ARMY GENERALS; AND, HIS BELIEF THAT NGO DINH NHU COMPARES WELL WITH COMMUNISTS	DATE DISTR.	23 SEPTEMBER 1963
DATE OF INFO.	13 SEPTEMBER 1963 AND AS STATED	PRECEDENCE	ROUTINE
PLACE & DATE ACQ.	VIETNAM, SAIGON (13 SEPTEMBER 1963)	REFERENCES	IN
APPRAISAL	SEE BELOW	FIELD REPORT NO.	

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

SOURCE APPR PHAM NGOC THAO'S GROUP PROBABLY IS PLANNING A COUP D'ETAT AGAINST THE DIEM REGIME, BUT WHETHER OR NOR THEY EVER ACHIEVE THE RIGHT COMBINATION OF UNITS TO TAKE ACTION CANNOT BE ASSESSED. THAO'S OPINION OF THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM GENERALS IS PROBABLY ACCURATE IN CERTAIN INSTANCES. THAO'S JUDGMENT OF NGO DINH NHU'S PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER IS POSSIBLY ACCURATE SINCE THAO IS A FORMER VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST.

1. SUMMARY. LIEUTENANT COLONEL PHAM NGOC THAO, SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR OF STRATEGIC HAMLETS FOR THE PRESIDENCY, SAID ON 13 SEPTEMBER 1963 THAT THE COUP D'ETAT PLANNING OF HIS GROUP IS PROGRESSING WELL, BUT THAT IT WILL NOT TAKE ACTION UNTIL IT IS REASONABLY CERTAIN OF SUCCESS. THAO MAINTAINED THAT THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GENERALS ARE UNDEPENDABLE AS THEY ARE AFRAID OF LOSING THEIR PRIVILEGED POSITIONS. HE ALSO CLAIMED THAT NGO DINH NHU WAS SIMILAR TO A COMMUNIST AS NHU IS ALSO DEVIUS, DISRESPECTFUL OF LEGALITY, AND WILL DO ANYTHING TO FURTHER HIS OWN GOALS.

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GROUP 1
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2. COLONEL THAO SAID THAT THE COUP D'ETAT GROUP TO WHICH HE BELONGS IS PLANNING CAREFULLY AND MOVING CAUTIOUSLY TOWARD A COUP SINCE THEY WISH TO BE REASONABLY CERTAIN OF SUCCESS. HE STATED THAT THE GROUP WILL TAKE ACTION WHEN THE RIGHT COMBINATION OF UNITS IS ACHIEVED. HE CLAIMED THAT THE MOVEMENT OF MILITARY UNITS TO SUPPORT AN ATTEMPTED COUP WAS GOING FAIRLY WELL AND THAT THE GROUP WAS NOW TRYING TO OBTAIN THE SUPPORT OF THE ARMORED UNITS IN SAIGON, WHICH WOULD MAKE A SUCCESSFUL COUP MUCH EASIER TO ATTAIN AND WOULD CAUSE LESS BLOODSHED.

3. THAO REMARKED THAT THE DEPARTURE OF IRAN KIM TUYEN, FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE PRESIDENTIAL SECURITY SERVICE, FROM SOUTH VIETNAM WILL PROBABLY HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE TUYEN GROUP COUP D'ETAT PLANNING, BUT MIGHT PROVE BENEFICIAL TO THAO'S GROUP AS NGO DINH NHU MIGHT RELAX IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT ONE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM'S MOST DANGEROUS ENEMIES IS OUT OF THE WAY.

4. THAO MAINTAINED THAT THE GENERALS OF THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM ARE UNDEPENDABLE; THEY CLAIM THAT THEY ARE AWAITING A POSITIVE INDICATION THAT THE NGO FAMILY IS PLACING PRESERVATION OF THEIR OWN PERSONAL POWER ABOVE THAT OF THE COUNTRY, AND/OR POSITIVE PROOF THAT NHU IS DEALING WITH THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM. THAO REMARKED THAT THESE ARE MERELY EXCUSES AND THAT THE GENERALS ARE AFRAID OF LOSING PRIVILEGED POSITIONS.

5. THAO REMARKED THAT, IN HIS OPINION, NHU MIGHT THINK THAT HE CAN MAKE A DEAL WITH THE COMMUNISTS AND END UP BY TRICKING THEM. THAO CLAIMED, HOWEVER, THAT IF NHU ACTUALLY BELIEVES SUCH A THING, HE IS VERY MUCH MISTAKEN. THAO STATED THAT

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NHU COMPARED WELL WITH HIGH-RANKING COMMUNISTS, BUT THAT HE MAKES UNILATERAL DECISIONS WHILE THE COMMUNISTS MAKE DECISIONS ONLY AFTER DISCUSSIONS, THUS PRECLUDING SERIOUS ERRORS. THAO SAID THAT, WHEN SPEAKING WITH NHU, HE HAS OFTEN FELT THAT HE WAS SPEAKING WITH A COMMUNIST SINCE NHU IS ALSO DEVIOUS, DISRESPECTFUL OF LEGALITY, AND WILL DO ANYTHING TO FURTHER HIS OWN GOALS.

6. THAO COMMENTED THAT NHU RECENTLY TOLD THAI LANG NGHIEM, A CLOSE FRIEND OF NHU, THAT HE WAS GOING TO DO SOMETHING SOON THAT WOULD BE VERY SURPRISING, BUT THAT IT WAS TOO EARLY TO DIVULGE WHAT HE HAS IN MIND. THAO HAD NO IDEA WHAT NHU HAD IN MIND, BUT SPECULATED THAT IT MIGHT BE SOMETHING TO DO WITH NORTH VIETNAM.

7. FIELD DISSEM. STATE USMACV CINCPAC ARPAC PACAF PACFLT.

END OF MESSAGE

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