

JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM
IDENTIFICATION FORM

AGENCY : NARA
RECORD NUMBER : 176-10036-10113
RECORD SERIES : National Security Files
AGENCY FILE NUMBER :

ORIGINATOR : CIA
FROM :
TO :
TITLE : CIA Information Telegram
DATE : 7/12/1963
PAGES : 4
SUBJECTS :
DOCUMENT TYPE :
CLASSIFICATION :
RESTRICTIONS :
CURRENT STATUS :
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 9/10/2000
OPENING CRITERIA :
COMMENTS : National Security Files, Box 198: Vietnam, 7/1/1963-7/20/63. Box 2

S. Vietnam 50

TELEGRAM INFORMATION REPORT TELEGRAM

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

SEE SANITIZED VERSION
NUM-81-269, NLK-89-15+
DOWNGRADED

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COUNTRY: SOUTH VIETNAM
REPORT NO: TDCS DB-3/655,517

SUBJECT: COUP D'ETAT PLAN OF NGO DINH NHU ON THE DATE DIST: 12 JULY 1963

PRECEDENCE/PRIORITY: PRIORITY

DATE OF INFO: 11-12 JULY 1963
REFERENCES: 78592

PLACE & DATE ACQ: VIETNAM, SAIGON (12 JULY 1963)

APPRAISAL: SEE BELOW
FIELD REPORT NO: FVS 9305

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

SOURCE: A GENERAL OFFICER (B) WHO EITHER ATTENDED THE MEETING OR WHO ACQUIRED THE INFORMATION FROM AN OFFICER WHO ATTENDED THE MEETING.

APPRAISAL: NGO DINH NHU IS PROBABLY PLANNING A COUP; HOWEVER, THE TIMING OF THE COUP ATTEMPT AND THE GENERALS WHO ARE SPECIFICALLY INVOLVED ARE UNKNOWN.

ON A CHANCE FOR SUCCESS THE ARMY MUST SEIZE THE INITIATIVE

DECISION SUMMARY: NGO DINH NHU PROPOSED TO ARMY GENERAL OFFICERS ON 11 JULY 1963 THAT THEY STAGE A COUP D'ETAT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THIS COUP MUST BE STAGED OVERNIGHT AND THE ARMY SHOULD TURN OVER CONTROL TO CIVILIANSE ON THE NEXT DAY.

NGO DINH NHU TOLD A GROUP OF GENERAL OFFICERS ON 11 JULY 1963 THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS MAKING NO PROGRESS IN THE WAR AGAINST THE VIET CONG OR IN OTHER PROGRAMS AND THAT THE GENERAL OFFICERS MUST PROVIDE THE ACTION REQUIRED. THE GENERAL OFFICERS HAVE BEEN CONTINUALLY HUMILIATED IN THE EYES OF THE PEOPLE AND IN ORDER TO REGAIN POPULAR RESPECT THEY MUST ENGINEER A COUP D'ETAT.

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OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE TO: DIRNSA (PROD WO)
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AFSSO
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WHITE HOUSE
SIT ROOM

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NHU SAID THAT HE WOULD SUPPORT THE COUP IN RESPONSE TO A QUERY. NHU SAID THAT THE GENERAL OFFICERS MUST SUPPORT HIM. NHU SAID THAT HE WAS NOT IN ACCORD WITH THE PRESIDENT OR WITH THE ADMINISTRATION IN GENERAL. ALTHOUGH MANY PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN HANDED TO HIM, HE HAS HAD NO REAL POWER TO FORCE THE PRESIDENT OR OTHERS TO MAKE DECISIONS OR TO TAKE NECESSARY ACTION. ONLY WITHIN THE PAST YEAR, IN FACT, HAS HE HAD ANY OFFICIAL POSITION, I.E., DIRECTOR OF THE STRATEGIC HAMLET PROGRAM.

NHU SAID THAT THE ARRIVAL OF A NEW U.S. AMBASSADOR WOULD BRING ABOUT CHANGES AND THAT FAST ACTION WAS NECESSARY. IMMEDIATE DECISIONS MUST BE REACHED IF THE COUP IS TO OCCUR. THIS WAS THE ONLY CHANCE FOR SUCCESS. THE ARMY MUST SEIZE THE TROUBLE-MAKERS.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE BUDDHIST MOVEMENT MUST BE QUELLED. NHU QUALIFIED THIS STATEMENT BY ADDING THAT HE DID NOT MEAN THE BUDDHISTS PER SE BUT THE REVEALING LEADERS, WHO WERE TO BE BLAMED BECAUSE THEY HAD USED THEIR RELIGION TO FURTHER THEIR OWN AMBITIONS AND DESIGNS.

5. NHU CONTINUED BY SAYING THAT THE COUP MUST BE STAGED OVERNIGHT; IT MUST BE LIGHTNING FAST AND PROBABLY ALL THAT WOULD BE NEEDED WOULD BE A SHOW OF FORCE. ON THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE GENERAL OFFICERS MUST TURN THE GOVERNMENT OVER TO CIVILIAN CONTROL.

IN RESPONSE TO A STATEMENT FROM MAJOR GENERAL NGUYEN NGOC LE, CHIEF OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, THAT SUCH AN ACTION REQUIRED

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MAJOR DECISIONS AND A PLAN, NHU SAID THAT HE AND HIS WIFE AND THE GENERAL OFFICERS WOULD HAVE THE REQUIRED PLAN. NHU COMMENTED THAT HE REALIZED THAT HIS WIFE WAS NOT LIKED BY MANY PEOPLE BUT THAT SHE HAD TRIED TO HELP IN THE FIGHT FOR VIETNAM AND THAT SHE HERSELF REALIZED THAT SHE HAD MANY SHORTCOMINGS.

6. GENERAL LE THEN SAID TO NHU: "YOU SAY THAT YOU DO NOT AGREE WITH THE GOVERNMENT BUT THE PEOPLE SAY THAT YOU ARE CONCERNED WITH ALL DECISIONS MADE". NHU REPEATED HIS COMMENTS ON LACK OF POWER, FAILURE TO HAVE HIS ADVICE ACCEPTED, AND HIS LACK OF OFFICIAL POSITION IN THE GOVERNMENT.

7. GENERAL LE COMMENTED ON 12 JULY THAT ALTHOUGH NHU MIGHT BE WILLING TO OVERTHROW THE DIEM GOVERNMENT, LE THOUGHT THAT THEY SHOULD PROCEED WITHOUT NHU, ADDING THAT ALL THAT THE NHUS WANTED TO DO WAS TO SAVE THEMSELVES. (SOURCE COMMENT: ALL OF THE NHU'S CHILDREN HAVE BEEN BROUGHT INTO SAIGON AND WERE UNDER HEAVY GUARD. THE NHUS ALSO HAVE AN ESCAPE PLAN.)

8. BRIGADIER GENERAL PHAM XUAN CHIEU SAID ON 12 JULY THAT ANY COUP D'ETAT ACTION MUST BE TAKEN IMMEDIATELY AND THAT ALL GENERAL OFFICERS SHOULD COOPERATE.

9. COLONEL LE QUAN VIEN SAID ON 12 JULY THAT HE HAD NOT ATTENDED THE 11 JULY MEETING BUT WAS AWARE THAT SOMETHING WAS GOING ON, ADDING THAT NHU AGREED WITH DIEM THAT SOME CHANGES SHOULD

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ATTENDED THE 117707Z MEETING... BE MADE BEFORE AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE LODGE ARRIVED; NHU, HOWEVER, WANTED TO GO FURTHER AND HAVE A COUP D'ETAT WITHOUT DELAY. VIEN SAID THAT THE FOLLOWING GENERAL OFFICERS WERE LEADERS IN THE COUP PLANNING GROUP: BRIGADIER GENERAL TON THAT DINH, COMMANDING GENERAL, III CORPS; COLONEL HUYNH VAN CAO, COMMANDER, IV CORPS; BRIGADIER GENERAL NGUYEN VAN LA, COMMANDER, CAPITAL AREA; AND BRIGADIER GENERAL NGUYEN KHANH, COMMANDING GENERAL, I CORPS. VIEN MENTIONED ANOTHER GROUP THAT WOULD SUPPORT A COUP PLACING VICE PRESIDENT THO IN TEMPORARY CONTROL AS INCLUDING MAJOR GENERAL DUONG VAN MINH, MILITARY ADVISOR TO THE PRESIDENT; BRIGADIER GENERAL TRAN VAN DON, COMMANDER OF THE ARMY; AND TWO OTHERS. VIEN SAID THAT HE BELIEVED HIS CONTENTS WOULD BE ACCEPTED AND HIS VOICE ACCEPTED AND HIS CONCERNED WITH THE DECISIONS MADE. VIEN SAID THAT HE HAD HIS VOICE ACCEPTED WITH THE GOVERNMENT BUT THE PEOPLE SAY THAT YOU ARE... GENERAL... THEN SAID TO... SHE HERSELF REALIZED THAT SHE HAD MANY SHORTCOMINGS... THAT SHE HAD TRIED TO HELP IN THE FIGHT FOR A VIETNAM AND THAT... HE REALIZED THAT HIS WIFE WAS NOT LOVED BY MANY PEOPLE BUT THE GENERAL OFFICERS WOULD HAVE THE RESPECTED... VIEN SAID THAT HE HAD HIS WIFE AND...

END OF MESSAGE

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