A FACT SHEET ON SOUTH VIETNAM

Geography: South Vietnam, officially the Republic of Vietnam, occupies the southeastern section of former French Indochina. It is bounded on the north at the 17th parallel by Communist North Vietnam; on the west by Laos and Cambodia; on the east by the South China Sea. The population is largely concentrated in the fertile rice-growing area of the Mekong River delta in the south and along the narrow strip of coastal plains.

Area: 65,750 square miles, or about twice the size of Maine.

Capital: Saigon. Its population is about 1,300,000, not including the suburb of Cholon with a population of about 800,000.

Population: 14,929,000 (1962 official estimate). The Vietnamese who form the vast majority of the population are related racially to the Chinese. The largest minority group, about 800,000, is of Chinese origin, most of whom live in Cholon. There are also about 500,000 Cambodians and about 16,000 French, two-thirds of whom are Eurasians. The highland region of the center is sparsely populated by tribes, known as "Montagnards," numbering about 700,000 and racially distinct from the Vietnamese.

Religion: It has been estimated that about 10 million people in South Vietnam consider themselves as Buddhists, and of these about 5 or 6 million are practicing Buddhists. Cao-Daism, which was founded in 1926, is a religious synthesis of Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism and had about 1.5 million followers at the end of 1954. The Hoa Hao sect, founded in 1939 and containing elements of Buddhism and magic, had about 500,000 believers. The political and military power of the Cao-Daist and Hoa Hao sects was broken in 1955. There are about 1.5 million Roman Catholics, many of whom are refugees from North Vietnam. Animist beliefs are prevalent among the "Montagnards."

Economy: South Vietnam is predominantly an agricultural country, with rice and rubber being the main cash crops and exports. About 80 percent of the population derive their livelihood from the land. Prior to the partition of Vietnam in 1954, most of the mining and industrial activities were concentrated in the north. The government in Saigon has made some progress in introducing light industries. South Vietnam has
had a continuing trade deficit, the value of exports averaging about 20% of the value of imports. The balance-of-payments difficulties have been met by large-scale U.S. economic assistance.

**Government:** The Republic is presently ruled by a military junta called the Armed Forces Council which has appointed a mixed civilian-military cabinet to take charge of the administration of the country.

**Leadership:**

Chairman of the Armed Forces Council - Maj. Gen. Tran Van ("Little") Minh, a Roman Catholic from the north, was named Acting Chairman to replace Gen. Khanh in February, 1965.

Chief of State - Phan Khac Suu, an adherent of Cao-Dai from the Mekong delta, was appointed in October 1964 and has remained in office through the political turmoil of recent months.

Premier - Dr. Phan Huy Quat, appointed in February, 1965, is a leader of the Dai Viet Party and served as Foreign Minister during Gen. Khanh's term as Premier last year.

Foreign Minister - Dr. Tran Van Do came out of retirement to take the post he held ten years ago before breaking with the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem.

*subject to change without notice.

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