

CIA Accused of Saigon Politicking

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Former Thieu Buddy Tells of Offer to Finance Party

By KEYES BEECH

SAIGON — A South Vietnamese legislator accused of pro-Communist sympathies said Monday the United States Central Intelligence Agency offered him money to finance a political party but the deal fell through because the CIA wanted him to support President Nguyen Van Thieu.

Tran Ngoc Chau, 46-year-old national assemblyman, said two CIA men approached him more than a year ago and told him



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they would supply the funds if he would launch his own party.

Chau, who formerly had close ties with the CIA, said he considered the proposal but failed to reach agreement because of his stand that the Saigon government should open negotiations with the National Liberation Front, political arm of the Viet Cong.

OFFICIALLY at least, Thieu is bitterly opposed to negotiations with the NLF. He has accused Chau of being a "tool of communism" because the latter did not denounce his broth-

er, a convicted Communist spy. Chau and Thieu were once close friends and as newly married young officers shared a house.

Chau declined to name the two CIA men who came to see him "because they were my friends and I don't want to hurt anybody."

But Chau is disenchanted with the Americans, especially the CIA, because, he says, they have refused to intervene in his behalf to clear him of Thieu's charges that he is a Communist. Chau swears he told CIA friends about his meetings with his brother in the mid-1960s. U.S. intelligence sources denied this.

"If this is a sample of the way the Americans treat their Vietnamese friends," Chau said, "I wonder about the future of thousands of other Vietnamese who have cooperated with the Americans."

Chau, who has been on the run for several weeks out of fear of arrest or assassination, was interviewed in a secret hideout outside Saigon.

No formal charges have been brought against Chau. However he has been under heavy pressure since Thieu's forces sought a three-fourths vote in the assembly to strip him and two other legislators of their parliamentary immunity so they can be tried for alleged Communist leanings.

Chau is a former province chief and once was in charge of all revolutionary development cadre in South Vietnam. The revolutionary development program was backed by CIA.

AFTER FIRST adopting a "hands off" attitude, Ambassa-

dor Ellsworth Bunker reportedly asked Thieu to soften his campaign against Chau because it was hurting the president's political image in the U.S.

After failing to have the three assemblymen expelled, pro-Thieu forces changed tactics. They now have almost enough signatures on a petition which would allow the three assemblymen to be tried by a military court without being present.

Then the court's verdict would be presented to the assembly to decide whether to strip them of their legislative immunity.

(Chicago Daily News Foreign Service)

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