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McGovern's SFChronicle Report of Thieu Threat

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Washington

Senator George McGovern said yesterday that South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu threatened last year to resign if United States military and economic aid to his government were even reduced.

"I think we ought to take him up on that," McGovern said.

He was interviewed for an hour on the ABC "Issues and Answers" television-radio program.

The Democratic candidate, who has been urging President Nixon to debate him, found himself faced with a question which he was told was submitted by the White House and commented that Mr. Nixon is afraid to come on such a program in person with McGovern and ask his own questions.

The question related to McGovern's comparison of U.S. bombing in Vietnam with Adolf Hitler's policies.

McGovern took the occasion to pose a question for Mr. Nixon — why the President has not offered any explanation of the break-in to Democratic national headquarters by persons associated with Mr. Nixon's campaign.

The exchange came when correspondent Frank Rey-

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nolds asked McGovern a question Reynolds said had been sent to ABC by the White House.

'INTERESTING'

"I think this is really an interesting development here that I should come on a program to be interviewed and have questions submitted by the White House," the South Dakota senator said.

"Isn't it interesting that the President himself is afraid, apparently, to come on this program with me or to come on any other television program and raise his own questions. He knows I would have some to ask him."

McGovern said that, when he was in South Vietnam in September, 1971, Thieu told

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him that he would resign from office at the first sign the U.S. was abandoning him.

"He told me directly . . . that even if we reduce American military and economic aid that he would resign," McGovern said. "I think we ought to take him up on that."

COALITION

McGovern said he thinks Thieu would refuse to participate in any coalition government involving a Communist representative.

"If we withdraw our support for him," McGovern said, "I have no doubt at all that within a matter of hours General Thieu would take care of the problem and he would be gone."

The question sent to McGovern from the White House was one of six or seven, according to Peggy Whedon, producer of the program. They were sent by Al Snyder, an assistant to White House communications director Herb Klein, she said.

The only one of the questions put to McGovern by the ABC interviewers referred to McGovern statements which the President's supporters contend defame Mr. Nixon by comparing him to Hitler.

DENIAL

McGovern said he had never "referred to President Nixon as an Adolf Hitler."

But he said he stands by his statement that "the dropping of several million tons of bombs on the civilian population of Indochina is the most barbaric thing that has happened since World War II, since the Nazis were in power . . . the killing, the wounding, the making homeless of some six million South Vietnamese people largely by American aerial bombardment."

And he said, "I personally hold Mr. Nixon responsible" for the bombing.

Reynolds said after the program that he and Tom Jarriel, the other interviewer, had planned to ask McGovern a question at least similar to the White House-suggested query anyway.

QUESTION

"My question" to the President, McGovern said on the air, is "Why have we had no explanation from the President of the United States about his seven agents, campaigning for his re-election, who invaded the Democratic National Committee?"

Seven men were indicted in connection with the break-in and alleged bugging of the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate apartment complex here last June.