

Bunker and Minh Meet, Said to Discuss Election

By ALVIN SHUSTER
Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Aug. 19 — Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker returned from 10 days of talks in Washington today and met for more than an hour with Gen. Dinh Van Minh in what some sources described as a final effort to persuade the presidential candidate to remain in the race.

Mr. Bunker, who earlier conferred for about an hour with President Nguyen Van Thieu, reportedly brought to General Minh new assurances that the United States would remain neutral in the elections and would use its influence for a reasonably fair and honest contest. Officials would not say, however, whether Mr. Bunker carried any messages from President Nixon.

Concern has been increasing among American officials that the 55-year-old retired general would drop from the race, leaving President Thieu with no opposition. Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, who had wanted to run, has been ruled ineligible by the Supreme Court on the ground that he failed to meet the requirements of a Thieu-backed electoral law.

"We are worried about Minh," one official acknowledged before Mr. Bunker drove

to the general's villa. "He could change his mind, but as of this moment I think he's going to quit."

General Minh, who led the 1963 coup d'etat against the Government of Ngo Dinh Diem, has threatened to withdraw from the elections Oct. 3 if it appeared that they would be rigged. His aides say they are now compiling evidence of what they call the "dishonest methods" of President Thieu to insure re-election.

The withdrawal of General Minh from the race would be a serious blow to American officials, already embarrassed that the Vice President of the country has been barred from the race. Although privately supporting President Thieu, high-ranking Americans want to see him win in a contested election that would demonstrate the success of the Constitutional system of the United States has tried to build here.

The hastily arranged meetings Mr. Bunker held with Thieu and General Minh on the day of his return seemed to confirm the widely held view here that the elections were among the key topics discussed in Washington with President Nixon and other officials. Mr. Bunker was summoned suddenly



Associated Press
BACK FROM WASHINGTON: Ellsworth Bunker, U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, and his wife being greeted by embassy aides in Saigon after his visit to the U.S. to discuss the South Vietnamese elections. Mrs. Bunker, Carol Laise, is U.S. Ambassador to Nepal.

by to the capital amid official apprehension that the presidential contest would develop into a meaningless one-man race. Mr. Bunker's absence, length with Deputy Ambassa-

dor Samuel D. Berger. It was this week is no longer General Minh conferred at whether General Minh will withdraw, but when. Many officials and diplomats feel he believe more strongly that the will pull out sometime after the elections for the lower house Aug. 29.