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ANTI-THIEU ACTION BY U.S. DOUBTED

No Move Seen to Express
Disapproval on Election

By **TERENCE SMITH**
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WASHINGTON, Aug. 20 — The Nixon Administration expressed regret today over the withdrawal of General Duong Van Minh from the South Vietnamese presidential race.

Although clearly disappointed by the prospect of a no-contest, one-man election, Administration officials said they doubted that Washington would express disapproval by cutting its economic or military support of the Government of President Nguyen Van Thieu.

The only public administration comment on the general's withdrawal came from Robert J. McCloskey, the State Department spokesman. "We regret that General Minh has withdrawn his candidacy," he said, "We favor a fair, honest and contested election — one that would lead to a choice for the South Vietnamese people."

Asked if there was any possibility of such an election now being held, Mr. McCloskey replied: "I can't answer that question here and now."

He noted that the South Vietnamese Supreme Court had not given its final ruling on the candidacy of Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, who failed to qualify for the race under the new election law passed earlier in the year by the National Assembly at President Thieu's behest.

Privately, however, officials said they had no reason to believe that the Supreme Court, which is strongly influenced by the President, would reverse its earlier ruling that the election law is constitutional.

Mr. McCloskey refrained from any direct criticism of President Thieu's campaign tactics, nor did he comment on General Minh's charges that Mr. Thieu had rigged the election.

Speaking in private, other officials said that General Minh had asked the United States Embassy in Saigon to endorse his charges of election fraud as proof of its neutrality in the race.

In San Clemente, Calif., the Presidential press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, said the United States regretted "the withdrawal of a major candidate from the election." He added that General Minh was believed to have made his decision to withdraw "prior to meeting with Ambassador Bunker" in Saigon this week.