

Thieu Accused of Election Rigging

Saigon

A South Vietnamese legislative committee accused the government of President Nguyen Van Thieu yesterday of numerous instances of election rigging.

The committee, consisting of Senators and deputies, asserted in an interim report that it has evidence of irregularities and rigging in connection with tomorrow's lower house election and the presidential election scheduled for October 3.

It declared that its findings, together with a "secret document" purportedly containing government orders to rig the elections, represent "a record of our bitter experiences with elections in this dark period of our country."

This controversial document was made public by Duong Van Minh, a retired general, in withdrawing from the presidential race last week.

PANEL

The legislative panel, known as the National Assembly Committee on Election Fraud, cited several cases in which opposition candidates for the lower house and their supporters were arrested, allegedly without pretext. The report said that after the committee had learned of the arrests and protested to the government, most of those were released.

In addition to Minh, vice president Nguyen Cao Ky has also dropped out of the presidential race on the ground that it is rigged in the president's favor. However, his name is still scheduled to appear on the ballot.

Thieu, although he has

made no public statements on the situation, is reported to be determined to go ahead with the presidential election despite the absence of any real opponent, and despite pressure from the United States to come up with a compromise that might persuade Ky to reverse his refusal to campaign.

OUTRAGE

Ky is reported to believe that public outrage over the election fraud issue will eventually force the president to yield. The vice president has suggested that both he and Thieu resign and that an interim government be set up to make new arrangements for a presidential election.

In its report, the legislative committee said that the document made public by Minh is authentic.

South Vietnam's Premier, General Tran Thiem Khiem, has denied that Thieu has issued the instructions that the document contains, but he has not specifically denied the paper's authenticity.

The U.S. Embassy has not officially stated its position on the matter, but several officials there have said privately that they are personally satisfied that it is genuine.

The document, which was transcribed by Minh's staff and mimeographed, purports to contain secret instructions from President Thieu to the province chiefs and other officials on ways to promote his own candidacy and those of pro-government deputies. It also calls for the discouragement of opposition representatives through threats, arrests and exile.

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