

Rogers Says U.S. Accepts Thieu Decision on Election

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 3—Secretary of State William P. Rogers indicated today that the United States accepted President Nguyen Van Thieu's decision to run alone next month as a test of public confidence in his administration in the absence of a contested presidential election in South Vietnam.

Senior Administration officials said later that Mr. Rogers, who said that the United States had tried hard but had failed to encourage a "fair and contested election," was saying that an

election that was in effect a referendum was preferable to a total suspension of the electoral process.

In the Administration's first detailed public discussion of Mr. Thieu's announcement this week that he would seek reelection unopposed despite the withdrawal of his two challengers, Mr. Rogers said at a news conference that the United States intended to continue supporting the Saigon Government.

Ky Sends Message

But serious concern over political stability in South Vietnam was reported to have developed in the Administration after the delivery to the State Department of a private message from Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky that he would block President Thieu's efforts to go through with the election.

The message was delivered yesterday to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, William H. Sullivan, by Dong Duc Khoi, an adviser to Mr. Ky. Mr. Khoi, who arrived here from Saigon on Wednesday, also met with high Defense Department officials.

It was understood that the Ky message was similar to statements made in Saigon today by the Vice President, saying that he was determined to "destroy" Mr. Thieu if the President did not cancel the election within two weeks.

At his news conference, Mr. Rogers expressed the hope of

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the United States that the election "will take place and that the public will have an opportunity to express their choice."

The Secretary also used the wide-ranging meeting with the press, his first since June 15, to hail today's signing of the Berlin agreement by the Big Four powers as a "step forward" in the "reconciliation between East and West."

Answering questions, Mr. Rogers made also these points:

¶The United States has found through international consultations that "there is a good deal of support" for assigning the United Nations Security Council seat now held by the Chinese Nationalists on Taiwan to the Peking Government. But he added, "We haven't made a decision about our own policy."

¶The United States will engage in "a very active program of discussions" during the remainder of the year to try to bring about an interim agreement between the United Arab Republic and Israel for the reopening of the Suez Canal. Mr. Rogers said he would discuss the subject with the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei A. Gromyko, during the United Nations General Assembly session this fall.

¶There is nothing unusual about investigations of news leaks in the State Department by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, but every effort will be made to prevent returning to the atmosphere that prevailed during investigations by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy in the nineteen-fifties.

'Disappointed' by Withdrawals

During the news conference, largely dominated by South Vietnamese political matters, Mr. Rogers said the United States was "disappointed" that Vice President Ky and Duong Van Minh, a retired general, had withdrawn from the presidential elections.

But Mr. Rogers said the United States hoped that the "democratic process will continue in South Vietnam." Because it wants to give the Vietnamese people "the right to solve these problems," the United States intends to "continue to give them support," he said.

He said he hoped that Mr. Thieu's decision to hold a one-man "referendum" would not increase pressures in the United States for a quicker withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam and a cut in American aid.

"I think it's little early to predict about what Congressional reaction and public reaction will be," he said. "We have hoped for a fair and contested presidential election in Vietnam, and President Thieu yesterday said that he regretted the fact that that had not occurred."

While Mr. Rogers voiced the Administration's hope that the election would give the Vietnamese a chance to express their "choice," he indicated that Mr. Thieu had not informed Washington how he proposed that this choice be manifested.

Mr. Thieu said yesterday that if he felt the voting showed a lack of confidence in his presidency, he would not accept another four-year term.

"Now we would hope that the program that President Thieu announced yesterday about a referendum would have some clarification," Mr. Rogers said. "I checked with Saigon this morning and I understand that President Thieu is going to have a press conference in a few days, and I hope that at that time questions will be raised about how opposition to the Government can be voiced."

Secretary Rogers added that "we're not sure yet what's going to happen" in Vietnam and noted that "democracies are not easy to develop in these countries."

Mr. Rogers described last Sunday's elections for the lower

house of the Vietnamese National Assembly as a "demonstration of democracy." Then he remarked that "obviously the elections in a country like Vietnam are not pristine and pure, but neither are ours, for that matter."

Under questioning, Mr. Rogers said that American efforts to achieve a "contested" election had failed.

"I am not sure in this case whether there was something we should have done that we didn't do," he said. "We tried to make it clear that the attitude was as I have expressed. We hoped that there would be a presidential election that would be contested and that would be a fair election."

"I don't have to recite the events since that time. I am sure that all of you will figure out all the mistakes we have made."

I don't know. We certainly tried. And President Thieu said he was disappointed. I think it is a little difficult from this distance to judge."